“MARIMBA POR TÍ ME MUERO”:
REGION AND NATION IN COSTA RICA, 1824-1939

by

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"MARIMBA POR TÍ ME MUERO":
REGION AND NATION IN COSTA RICA, 1824-1939

Analyzing regional identity construction in the peripheral northwestern Costa Rican province of Guanacaste, and the creation of regionalist discourse and political organization in Costa Rica from the early twentieth century to 1939, this dissertation studies the historical dynamics between region and nation. The concept of region employed here is not focused on an economic, geographical, or historical entity but understood primarily as a space and a community imagined by the promoters of regionalism and by the intellectuals and politicians of the country's administrative center. The primary sources used in the dissertation are mainly government documents and newspapers. The principal vehicle in the creation of the imagined region and regional identity was the regionalist newspaper, which became the organ of the regionalist movement and the political party. The discourse of regionalist publicists emphasized harmony, unity, and class conciliation in the province, a construction that served to mask the conflictive social relations in the region and thus benefited the interests of the regional elites. Political regionalism in the form of a regionalist party that competed in national elections had a brief heyday in the late 1930s, but did not endure, as the Costa

Rican political system made the transition from a liberal to a reformist/welfare state model beginning in the 1940s.

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Introduction: Region and Nation in Costa Rica

> "El problema para los ticos es que sin Nicoya ni Guanacaste, Costa Rica dejaría de existir, porque todos los valores nicaragüenses de esos territorios conforman sus mejores cualidades: cultura, folklore, turismo y todo lo que vende Costa Rica, procede de esos territorios arrebatados a Nicaragua."[1]
>
> "[T]he study of invented traditions cannot be separated from the wider study of the history of society, nor can it expect to advance much beyond the mere discovery of such practices unless it is integrated into a wider study."[2]

Nation building in Costa Rica has gone through multiple stages with different problematics, although some of the essential elements of national discourse were elaborated as early as the 1820s.[3] During the first decades of postcolonial state building, the question was how to create a feasible political community that could be called a nation and could function as such. The first political community pursued in this way encompassed all of Central America, but after the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Central America began in 1838, its former constituents had to adjust their idea of

[1] "Nicaragua reclamará Guanacaste. Costa Rica estalla en insultos. Canciller nica: "nos vemos en La Haya." *La Estrella de Nicaragua*, año XVIII, edición 319, Miami-Dade, FL, November 16-30, 2005. http://www.estrelladenicaragua.com/ as of November 19, 2005.

[2] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12.

[3] In his seminal research on national identity in Costa Rica, Steven Palmer argued that the systematic building of national identity and symbols began by 1885. Steven Palmer, "A Liberal Discipline: Inventing Nations in Guatemala and Costa Rica" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990); "Sociedad Anónima, Cultura Oficial: Inventando la Nación en Costa Rica, 1848-1900," in *Héroes al Gusto y Libros de Moda. Sociedad y cambio cultural en Costa Rica (1750-1900)*, edited by Iván Molina and Steven Palmer (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1992), 169-205; "Getting to Know the Unknown Soldier: Official Nationalism in Liberal Costa Rica, 1880-1900," en: *Journal of Latin American Studies* 25 (1993): 45-72. However, it seems that the essential ideas of the Costa Rican nation as peaceful, homogeneous and of European origin were already present in elite discourse in the second half of the 1820s. See Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "La invención de la diferencia costarricense, 1810-1870," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 45 (Jan.-June 2002): 191-228. David Díaz Arias has shown how Liberal rulers and intellectuals in the second half of the 1880s crafted a ritual construction of the Costa Rican nation using discursive images at least four decades old. David Díaz Arias, "La fiesta de la independencia en Costa Rica, 1821-1921" (M.A. thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001); and *Rituales cívicos, memoria, identidad nacional y poder: la fiesta de la independencia en Costa Rica, 1821-1921* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, forthcoming).

nation and begin imagining that their poor and unstable provinces could become nation-states. Costa Rican elites began the process of creating a province-wide political community earlier than other Central Americans, facilitated by the common interests of the local elites involved in the booming coffee economy since the 1830s.

Since the first moments of independence from Spain, the elites began to foster ideas of Costa Rica as politically and culturally distinct from the rest of the provinces of the Central American Federation. The country's first history book was published in 1851, and its author, Felipe Molina, sought to demonstrate that Costa Rica was a nation based on a homogeneous—white—population, peaceful political practices, and free trade.[4] According to Víctor Hugo Acuña, Felipe Molina did not create the national myths, but only summarized what had circulated in the country since independence, and what had already become part of elite common sense in Costa Rica. Central American elites had likewise adopted this perception of Costa Rica, reproduced by Felipe Molina and captured by several foreign travelers who visited the country even before 1851.[5] The first governing council of independent Costa Rica had affirmed in 1822 that as Costa Ricans finally conquered their liberty, "[e]n el momento que os reconocisteis en su pleno goce, aborreciendo las exaltaciones y negros sentimientos de muchos pueblos del septentrión, sólo os movió la mira religiosa de perpetuar la paz que os es como innata y adherente."[6] Costa Ricans were perceived as judicious, neutral, pacific, naturally

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[4] Arturo Taracena, "Felipe Molina Bedoya en la historia de Costa Rica," in Felipe Molina Bedoya, *Bosquejo de la República de Costa Rica*, with an introduction by Arturo Taracena Arriola and Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2001), xiv-xv.

[5] Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Felipe Molina y la invención de la diferencia costarricense," in Molina Bedoya, *Bosquejo de la República de Costa Rica*, xxiii-xxiv.

[6] Proclamation of the Primera Junta Superior Gubernativa, quoted in Acuña Ortega, "Felipe Molina," xxv.

inclined to live in harmony, while the other Central American countries—especially adjacent Nicaragua—were associated with discord, conflict, and internal war.[7] Costa Rica was thought to produce envy and admiration not only in the rest of the isthmus but even further afield.[8] In addition to the notion of Costa Ricans as naturally peaceful people, elites affirmed from early on that Costa Ricans were racially homogeneous: specifically, white. In 1840 the official paper of Costa Rica stated that,

> Costa Rica ofrece ventajas para llevar adelante el sistema prusiano, que no presenta ninguna sección de América: su población es homogénea: todos son blancos, todos hablan castellano: todos tienen iguales costumbres y lo mejor todos, a excepción del Guanacaste y Puntarenas están situados en una extensión de doce leguas…[9]

This vision of Costa Rica as a racially homogeneous—white—and essentially pacific community was reproduced systematically from early republican life onwards, and by the late nineteenth century, the idea of peaceful, white, and exceptionally democratic Costa Ricans had become a fundamental pillar of official nationalism. This

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[7] The Junta Gubernativa urged Costa Ricans in 1824 to "Volved hacia el de Nicaragua y observaréis la ruina por la división, en términos que sus individuos, emigrando hacia acá, le desamparan.… Sería la cosa más lastimosa que un estado cuya suerte es envidiada por su unión que cortó brevemente la primera división que nació en su seno, se arruinase ahora por diferencias particulares, o que por la desidia y apatía no se uniformasen sus hijos a asegurar su futura suerte." Quoted in Acuña Ortega, "Felipe Molina," xxvii. According to Acuña Ortega, the practice of comparing themselves to Nicaragua made it possible for Costa Ricans to maintain the pacific and exemplary image of Costa Rica in spite of the many political and military conflicts between 1835 and 1857. Acuña Ortega, "La invención de la diferencia costarricense, 1810-1870," 217.

[8] Acuña Ortega, "Felipe Molina," xxviii. For example, in 1838, Chief of State Manuel Aguilar declared, "Me es sumamente satisfactorio informaros: que la tranquilidad del estado continúa sin el más pequeño asomo de agitación, infundiendo la seguridad precisa para todo género de empresas tanto al hijo del país como al extranjero. Este es el carácter que siempre ha distinguido a Costa Rica, y por el que se le conoce en el extranjero debido desde luego a sus virtudes." Quoted in Ileana Muñoz, *Educación y régimen municipal en Costa Rica 1821-1882* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 20. Ileana Muñoz observed that as early as 1830 contending political forces routinely used the same discourse of peace, harmony, and the absence of "disturbances of the political regime" to build an ideal self image as political community. Ibid., 17-21.

[9] *El Costarricense. Semanario Oficial* no. 95 (September 30, 1848), p. 521, quoted by Acuña Ortega, "La invención de la diferencia costarricense," 209. Acuña Ortega adds that Montúfar y Coronado had expressed the same idea already in 1832. Acuña Ortega, "Felipe Molina," xxxiii.

ideological construction of racial homogeneity and peacefulness was then enriched, from the 1940s onwards, as reformist and social democratic intellectuals began to emphasize the egalitarianism that supposedly constituted Costa Rica's colonial heritage.[10] In particular, one of the nation's most influential historians, Carlos Monge Alfaro, popularized the notion that Costa Rica had been a rural democracy since the late colonial period.[11]

The foundational national myths have been intensely examined and deconstructed from different viewpoints in recent decades, beginning in the 1970s as a few historians began to question the received wisdom of an egalitarian and rural democratic past.[12] Since the 1990s the revisionist research has reached impressive depth, closely engaged

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[10] Among these reformist and social democrat intellectuals were Rodrigo Facio, Carlos Monge Alfaro, and Eugenio Rodríguez Vega. In his *Apuntes para una sociología costarricense* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria, 1953), based on his Licenciatura thesis written at the Law School of the University of Costa Rica in 1952, Rodríguez Vega analyzed Costa Rican society and at the same time established a narrative of Costa Rican history, "national character," and class structure. According to Carlos Monge Alfaro, Costa Rican nationality reflected the characteristics of the Central Valley population. See Carlos Monge Alfaro, *Geografía social y humana de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta y Librería Universal, 1942), 55. Monge's *Geografía social y humana* became an official textbook for schools in 1942. See Decree no. 140 of October 23, 1942, in *Colección de Leyes y Decretos*, 1942, 359. See also Juan Rafael Quesada Camacho, "Carlos Monge Alfaro: primer historiador profesional de Costa Rica," in *Carlos Monge Alfaro* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1988), 98-99.

[11] Carlos Monge Alfaro, *Historia de Costa Rica*, 17.ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Trejos, 1982). Monge's ideas about rural democracy had been published in the late 1930s and 1940s. For a complete discussion of the authors who wrote in this vein, see Iván Molina, "Los jueces y los juicios del legado colonial del Valle Central de Costa Rica," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 32 (1986): 99-117. See also Quesada Camacho, *Carlos Monge Alfaro*, 76 and 80.

[12] See for example Samuel Stone, *La dinastía de los conquistadores* (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1975); Elizabeth Fonseca Corrales, *Costa Rica Colonial. la tierra y el hombre* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1983); Mario Samper, *Generations of Settlers: Rural Households and Markets on the Costa Rican Frontier, 1850-1935* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990); Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costa Rica (1800-1850) el legado colonial y la génesis del capitalismo* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1991); Yamileth González, *Continuidad y cambio en la estructura agraria de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1985); Lowell Gudmundson, *Costa Rica before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of the Export Boom* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).

with international scholarly debates over nationalism.[13] Historians have systematically unmasked the country's national myths by using new theoretical and methodological frameworks to analyze nationalism and national identities, thus uncovering the history of official nationalism in Costa Rica.[14] Their research has demonstrated that the project of nation-creation in Costa Rica was furthered by coffee elites and systematized by the liberal state and its intellectuals from the 1880s onward. Scholars in disciplines such as communications and literary studies have also produced a significant corpus of research

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[13] The works of Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and Ernest Gellner have been especially influential since the early 1990s among historians of nationalism in Costa Rica.

[14] In addition to the works already mentioned above, there are many other historical studies of the Costa Rican nation and nationalism. See, for example, Steven Palmer, "Hacia la 'Auto-inmigración'. el nacionalismo oficial en Costa Rica, 1870-1930," in *Identidades nacionales y Estado moderno en Centroamérica*, edited by Arturo Taracena and Jean Piel (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995), 75-85; "Racismo intelectual en Costa Rica y Guatemala, 1870-1920," in *Mesoamérica* (Guatemala) 17, no. 31 (June 1996); Jussi Pakkasvirta, *¿Un continente, una nación?: intelectuales latinoamericanos, comunidad política y las revistas culturales en Costa Rica y en el Perú (1919-1930)* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1997; Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Historia del vocabulario político en Costa Rica: estado, república, nación y democracia, 1821-1949," in *Identidades nacionales y Estado moderno en Centroamérica*, compiled by Arturo Taracena and Jean Piel (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995), 63-74; "Las concepciones de la comunidad política en Centroamérica en tiempos de la independencia (1820-1823)," *TRACE* 37 (June 2000): 27-40; "Comunidad política e identidad política en Costa Rica en el siglo XIX," *Istmo. Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos* 2 (July-Dec. 2001) http://www.denison.edu/istmo/v01n02/proyectos-/comunidad.html; Yolanda Dachner Trujillo, "De la nación centroamericana a la patria chica" (M.A. thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2000); David Díaz Arias, "La invención de las naciones en Centroamérica, 1821-1950," paper presened at the colloquium *Identidades Revis(it)adas, artes visuales, literatura, música, danza e historia en América Centra*l, Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica de la Universidad Centroamericana (IHNCA-UCA), Managua, Nicaragua, October 27-29, 2004; David Díaz Arias and Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Identidades nacionales en Centroamérica: bibliografía de los estudios historiográficos," in *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 45 (Jan.-June 2002): 267-283; Ronald Soto Quirós, **"**Inmigrantes e identidad nacional en Costa Rica. 1904-1942. Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'" (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997); "Desaparecidos de la Nación: los indígenas en la construcción de la identidad nacional costarricense, 1851-1924," in *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* (San José, Costa Rica) 82 (Dec.1998): 31-53; Soto Quirós, "Un intento de historia de la inmigración en Costa Rica. El discurso sobre la inmigración a principios del siglo XX: una estrategia nacionalista de selección autovalorativa," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 40 (July-Dec. 1999): 79-105; Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costarricense por dicha: identidad nacional y cambio cultural en Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002); several chapters in Francisco Enríquez Solano and Iván Molina Jiménez, eds., *Fin de siglo XIX e identidad nacional en México y Centroamérica* (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico-Cultural "Juan Santamaría," 2000); Ronny Viales, "El Museo Nacional de Costa Rica y los albores del discurso nacional costarricense (1887-1900)," *Vínculos* (San José, Costa Rica) 21, nos. 1-2 (1995): 99-123; Marc Edelman, "Un Genocidio en Centroamérica: hule, esclavos, nacionalismo y la destrucción de los indígenas guatusos-malecus," *Mesoamérica* (Guatemala) 36 (Dec. 1998): 539-591.

on Costa Rican nationalism.[15] Recent work has further documented the active participation of subaltern sectors within Costa Rica in the creation, adaptation, and consolidation of nationalism.[16]

In general, scholars have concluded that the official nation was created in a framework that excluded certain groups and cultures, and that this was done from the standpoint of the Central Valley, the administrative center of the country, where the coffee industry originated and boomed and the coffee oligarchy dwelled. This centralist bias has led to a vicious circle in which historians (creators and reproducers of national discourse and myths) have focused on the Central Valley, and in doing so confirmed their own conviction that no historical processes of import occurred in the peripheral areas of the country.[17] Thus, not only has national identity been produced from the perspective of the center, but historical research on nation and nationalism in Costa Rica has focused almost exclusively on processes in the Central Highlands. State and nation in Costa Rica have not been studied from the regional perspectives, except when some region is mentioned with the purpose of showing the exclusion of certain sectors and spaces from

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[15] See, for example, Carlos Sandoval García, *Otros amenazantes. Los nicaragüenses y la formación de identidades nacionales en Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002); Flora Ovares et al.**,** *La casa paterna: escritura y nación en Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1993); Álvaro Quesada Soto, *La formación de la narrativa nacional costarricense (1890-1910): enfoque histórico-social* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1986); *La voz desgarrada: la crisis del discurso oligárquico y la narrativa costarricense, 1917-1919* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1988); *Uno y los otros. Identidad y literatura en Costa Rica, 1890-1940* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998); Alexander Jiménez Matarrita, *El imposible país de los filósofos*, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Perro Azul, 2003).

[16] See, for instance, Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Nación y clase obrera en Centroamérica durante la época liberal, 1870-1930," in *El paso del cometa. Estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica, 1800-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir y Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1994), 145-165.

[17] The emphasis on the country's central area can be justified in part, as more than a half of population has lived and still lives in the Central Valley. The proportion of total population living in the Central Valley was 77% in 1864, 73% in 1892, and 60% in 1927. Edwin González Salas, *Evolución histórica de la población de Costa Rica, 1840-1940* (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1992). 40.

official nationalism. The central region of the country is thought to represent the entire nation, and it is not even imagined as a region but as the "real" Costa Rica.

Region in Costa Rica

To affirm that state or nation has not been studied from regional perspectives does not mean regions in Costa Rica have been totally omitted in historical research. There are several excellent studies that have tried to explain regional specificities, or examined regions in the context of specific economic processes, such as the cycles of banana exports. The Caribbean lowlands have attracted the most attention along these lines, as Costa Rican and foreign scholars have reconstructed the history of banana plantations, and analyzed the Caribbean region as a space configured by processes related to the development of the United Fruit Company "enclave."[18] A few scholars have studied other regions in Costa Rica from the perspective of economic and social history, approaching the region as the place and space where the human activity under study

[18] Jeffrey Casey Gaspar, *Limón 1880-1940. Un estudio de la industria bananera en Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979); Philippe Bourgois, *Ethnicity af Work: Divided Work on a Central American Banana Plantations* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Aviva Chomsky, *West Indian Workers and the United Fruit Company in Costa Rica, 1870-1950* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); Carmen Murillo Chaverri, *Identidades de hierro y humo: la construcción del ferrocarril al Atlántico 1870-1890* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1995); Ronny Viales Hurtado, *Después del enclave: 1927-1950. Un estudio de la región atlántica costarricense* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998); "La reconceptualización del 'enclave' bananero desde la perspectiva de la historia económica. Una propuesta a partir del caso de la región Atlántica (Caribe) costarricense entre 1870 y 1950," in *El Caribe centroamericano,* edited by Jussi Pakkasvirta and Kent Wilska, Renvall Institute Publication Series (Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki, 2005), 32-71; "La crisis de la región atlántica costarricense entre 1927 y 1950: elementos para la reconceptualización del enclave bananero en Costa Rica" (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 1998); Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); among others. On the banana industry on the Pacific coast, see Ana Luisa Cerdas, "El surgimiento del enclave bananero en el Pacífico Sur," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 28 (July-Dec. 1993): 117-159.

occurs, but with no interest in discussing the concepts of region or regionalism or their relationships with nation, state, or nationalism.[19]

My dissertation aims to analyze region and regional identity building in Guanacaste as an intimate part of Costa Rican national identity building in the first decades of the twentieth century. Here, regional identity was constructed not in opposition to but as a subcategory of national identity. Early-twentieth-century Guanacastecan elites promoted regional pride as a component of nationalism, as their particular contribution to the *patria* and its progress. To be a good *guanacasteco* was to be a good *costarricense*. But as Central Valley settlements monopolized the fruits of Costa Rica's increasing integration into the global economy, the dissonance between national achievements and regional aspirations grew. In this context, Guanacaste's emerging professionals and intellectuals in the 1920s used regionalist discourse to criticize national state policies.

Guanacastecan elites' construct of Guanacastecan identity relied on a heavily edited version of the region's past and highlighted select elements of popular culture. This regionalist discourse served to mute class conflict, especially in the straitened circumstances of the 1930s. Practices drawn from the labor routines of the very hacienda system that drove Guanacaste's severe inequities of land ownership and political power were celebrated as emblems of a unifying regional culture. Yet elites' cultivation of regionalist discourse was never simply a fraud aimed at confounding those they employed and exploited. Elites sought progress for their region and believed their efforts

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[19] Ronny Viales has been one of the very few historians in Costa Rica to examine the concept of region in his *Después del enclave.* Carlos Granados discussed the concepts of regionalism, place, and locality in connection to state building in his "Place, Politics and Nation-Building in Costa Rica, 1812-1842" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1993).

toward that goal were crucial to the progress of the nation they also loved. Their self-interest was conceived and justified within the framework of these overlapping political communities.

How unusual was the entwined development of regionalism and nationalism in Guanacaste? Was there a wide variety of ways in which the peripheral regions of postcolonial Latin America responded to their distance from the centers of political power and public investment? Are the regionally specific demands made by certain indigenous movements today, for instance, similar to or different from regionalist claims and critiques in the past? Because of the way in which the growth of national states shaped the growth of the historical profession itself, we know remarkably about such questions. As Celia Applegate notes, nineteenth-century nationalism produced a hierarchical order in historical research: history was studied in order to develop national identities and not others.

> The devaluation of regions and their pasts in the nineteenth century thus emerged naturally alongside the triumph of the national historiographies. It drew on a rich vocabulary—common to all European bourgeois elites since the Enlightenment—stigmatizing the provincial, the particular, and the parochial. The study of regions, provinces, and local places did not disappear, but it became subordinate to the national history project and pursued mainly by little-regarded amateurs in local historical societies.[20]

This hierarchical legacy remained powerful in spite of the renovation embodied by the Annales School, and continued through the postwar period, as regions and provinces were increasingly studied, but always as complementary and subordinated to national frameworks. Nations, not regions, provinces, or localities, have been considered

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[20] Celia Applegate, "A Europe of Regions: Reflections of the Historiography of Subnational Places in Modern Times," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4. (Oct. 1999): 1160.

important. Likewise in Costa Rica the nationalist framework has hindered scholarly attention to regions outside of the Central Valley. Costa Rican national imagery turned one region—the Central Valley—into *the* nation, and turned all other regions into deviations: different from the nation, peripheral, not-quite-Costa-Rican.

Only a handful of scholars have been interested in researching the economic and social history of Nicoya-Guanacaste.[21] However, based on those few studies, it is possible to discern the economic cycles the region has experienced since the second half of the nineteenth century, and to explain the connections between those cycles and the political and cultural constructions of region generated both within and beyond its borders. Understanding this connection between socio-economic development, politics, and culture is crucial for explaining the ways in which this particular region ended up being incorporated into national imagery.

The nationalist conviction that the "true" Costa Rica has always been culturally and racially homogeneous and white has thwarted social science research into peripheries and communities outside the Central Valley—usually assumed to be *different* from the national mainstream in self-evident ways that require no empirical investigation—and has prevented scholars from seeing these places as important for nation's history. This stands in contrast to developments in countries such as Mexico, where consciousness of cultural diversity and social and political asymmetries has been unavoidable for scholars. Cultural variety and economic, topographic, and environmental variation have all contributed to the definition of regions in Mexico.[22] The underlying problem that these kinds of studies

[21] Among those few are Claudia Quirós, Lowell Gudmundson, Wilder Sequeira, and Marc Edelman.

try to solve has to do with the effort to find "true" regions, and it is usually thought that an administrative region—such as a province—is hardly a true region. But what is a 'true' region? How can we measure it? What are the most appropriate criteria to identify it? Does the quality or level of authenticity of a region depend on subjective experiences—including imagination—or only on objective factors like, for example, the interdependence between a city and its hinterland (the so-called nodal regions)?

Arturo Taracena has discussed the concept of 'regionality,' another example of the scholarly search for 'true' regions. Taracena's thorough study of region and regionalism in Western Guatemala demonstrated the importance of studying subnational regions in Central America.[23] His work inspired me to meditate on the particularities of the province of Guanacaste, and ultimately led me to approach region and regionalism in the case of Guanacaste from a very different perspective than that of his study of the *Estado de los Altos* in Western Guatemala. Western Guatemalan elites created an economic and historical region, and based on it, endeavored to attain political independence, while simultaneously excluding the native population from their state project. In contrast, in Guanacaste elites were not interested in the separation or creation of their own state, but rather in a more effective institutional and infrastructural insertion of their province into the national state. While in Western Guatemala Indians were

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[22] For example, Bassols Batalla has identified twenty-five 'geomorphological' regions and Whetten eleven 'natural' regions in Mexico. Diana Liverman and Altha Cravey, "Geographical Perspectives on Mexican Regions," in *Mexico's Regions: Comparative History and Development*, edited by Eric Van Young (San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1992), 39-57. Magnus Mörner in his study of the Quebra Quilos movement in 1870s Brazil likewise chose to define the region in geo-ecological instead of administrative terms. Magnus Mörner, "The Masses Face in the Modernizing Ambitions of the National State," in *Region and State in Latin America's Past* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 53-67.

[23] Arturo Taracena, *Invención criolla, sueño ladino, pesadilla indígena. Los Altos de Guatemala: de región a Estado 1740-1850* (San José: Editorial Porvenir; CIRMA; Delegación Regional de Cooperación Técnica y Científica del gobierno de Francia, 1997).

excluded from the regional project, in Guanacaste poor people and their culture—especially that related to the hacienda and cattle economy—became key symbols within the regional identity constructed by middle-class intellectuals and provincial elites. Although Guanacastecan subaltern sectors were socially and politically excluded from regional power and from the regionalist movement, they were symbolically included when certain features of their everyday life became part of the celebrated regional culture.

Recently, an important group of historians and anthropologists analyzing regions in Latin American history have noted that Latin American regions are usually racialized, and Indians and blacks associated with 'backward' regions in ways that locate these populations and places alike as outside of the nation.[24] Certainly this holds true for Costa Rica, where the Caribbean has been excluded from the official image of the nation because of its putative blackness. Backward Guanacaste has been racialized—as *the* mestizo region—and defined as completely different from the Central Valley. Already in the nineteenth century, foreign travelers described Guanacaste as racially and culturally different from other Costa Rican regions. Costa Rican publicists began to reproduce the language of difference in the early twentieth century, but only in the late 1930s did they begin to look for the causes of Guanacastecan backwardness. Central Highland intellectuals tied the supposed lack of civilization of Guanacastecan culture and everyday life to the native legacy within Guanacastecans' mestizo racial stock, even as they ignored and obliterated the historical reality of Guanacastecans' partial African ancestry.

[24] Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, eds., *Race and Nation in Modern Latin America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

According to this line of thought, Guanacastecan cowboy—*el sabanero*—was a savage son of nature mainly because of the influence of the Indian blood in him.

If an administrative region is not a "true" region, is it legitimate to study a province as a region, as I have done here? My choice is based on the fact that the promoters of regionalism imagined their province as a region and called their movement regionalism.[25] The region they imagined was 'real' for them and also became 'real' for the rest of the society. Following Nancy Appelbaum's insightful work on Colombia, I prefer not to use region as an analytical tool, but treat it instead as a product of discursive creation and practice in a certain historical context: in this case, the growing social conflict in the region together with the specific measures taken by the national government in the face of a world economic crisis.[26]

Chapters

The first chapter of this dissertation gives the historical background of the geographic region discussed in this study, showing the region to have functioned as a frontier zone and a place of long distance exchange before and, to certain extent, even during colonial rule. This chapter also shows Guanacastecans' active role in postcolonial struggles over national power, arguing against the subsequently generalized idea that the province was totally isolated from national political processes in the nineteenth century.

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[25] The terms 'regionalism' and 'regional culture' were common in newspapers in the 1920s. See, for example, *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 2, 1924, 7, and Chapter 3, below.

[26] Nancy Appelbaum, *Muddied Waters: Race, Region, and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19-23.

The second chapter discusses Guanacaste during the period of liberal modernization and progress that began in the late nineteenth century. The new situation of Guanacastecan 'backwardness' resulted from an uneven project of modernization in Costa Rica. Costa Rican elites and intellectuals in the Central Highlands and Guanacaste alike adopted the discourse of modernization and progress, and so it was possible for them to sell the image of the modern city and progressive people of Liberia in the *Libro Azul de Costa Rica* (The Blue Book of Costa Rica) published in 1916. At the same time other images revealed the falsity of this portrait of regional progress; Guanacaste also became a showpiece of backwardness in Costa Rica.

The third chapter analyzes how regionalist ideas began to be popularized in the Costa Rican press from the early 1900s onward, and explores the basic content of the incipient regionalist discourses. Publicists claimed that Guanacaste had been abandoned by the state, and that it was necessary to create a sense of belonging to the province among its inhabitants. This incipient regionalism was formulated within a nationalist framework—it was not yet a regionalist project—but events surrounding the 1924 centennial anniversary of the annexation of Guanacaste to Costa Rica generated resentment that later had political consequences.

The fourth chapter discusses the organized regionalist political movement in the 1930s, when the conjuncture of worldwide depression and growing social conflict in Guanacaste spurred a new regionalist construction. The region imagined by the leaders of the movement was a harmonious space of class conciliation, where especially the lower classes were obliged to be conscious of the rules for being true Guanacastecans. In this period specific images of Guanacastecan popular culture—especially the *sabanero*

cult—were established as representative of the imagined region. The political party founded in 1937 both reflected and furthered this discourse of class conciliation, representing its leader as a redemptive *caudillo* for all Guanacastecans.

Chapter One

Guanacaste before Liberal Progress: From Pre-Hispanic Times to Postcolonial Struggles over the State

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review briefly the history of Guanacaste, focusing on its interregional dynamics before and after the conquest and its integration into postcolonial national society during the nineteenth century. Major population movements and long distance exchange characterized the Nicoya region during the pre-Hispanic period: its peripheral status in the context of the late nineteenth-century national state represented new marginalization rather than immemorial isolation. Pre-Hispanic Nicoya was a frontier, a corridor receiving people from different places within the Mesoamerican and South American cultural areas. This position as contact zone and crossroads endured under early colonial rule, albeit weakening from the seventeenth century onward. Yet to a certain extent it persisted throughout the colonial period, as colonial travelers' writings make clear. The postcolonial state of Costa Rica, however, incorporated the Nicoya region as a borderland and periphery, considering it only of secondary economic and political importance for the country. The mid-nineteenth century Central Highland coffee boom inaugurated the real marginalization of Nicoya and Guanacaste. The region that had played a central role in pre-Hispanic and colonial migration and exchange came to be considered a peripheral borderland once coffee exports became the focus of state activism, the target of nationalist imagination, and the arbiter of the nation's place in world economy.[1] However, the picture of Guanacaste as a

[1] Costa Rica was the first country in Central America to develop coffee exports, in the 1830s, and there are several dozen historical studies of the coffee economy. See, for example, Carolyn Hall, *El café y el*

region totally isolated from the power struggles of the center dissolves when we consider even a few of the most important moments for the nineteenth-century Costa Rican state, moments in which Guanacastecans participated actively in the battles over state power, or played a central role in the nation's international conflicts, as with the war of 1856.

The Evolving Nicoya Region

The region under study is quite difficult to define in the Braudelian perspective of historical *longue durée*, because no continuous criteria can be used for that definition. I focus instead on the region as a historical and discursive construction produced by certain social, cultural, and political processes. However, in order to understand the historical context of the creation of this kind of imagined region, it is necessary to grasp the long-term processes that took place in this dynamic space. Today's province of Guanacaste is only part of what scholars have defined as the pre-Hispanic *Nicoya Region*, which served as a frontier between different cultures and administrative units. At the same time, the province extends beyond the boundaries of the colonial administrative unit of the Partido de Nicoya. The *Nicoya Region* was long a contact zone where different cultures met and diverse customs, expertise, and information were exchanged. In the pre-Hispanic period, Nicoya was the southern frontier of the Mesoamerican cultural area. In the colonial

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desarrollo histórico-geográfico de Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica – Universidad Nacional, 1976); Robert G. Williams, *States and Social Evolution: Coffee and the Rise of National Governments in Central America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Lowell Gudmundson, *Costa Rica Before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of the Export Boom* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Mario Samper K., "Café, trabajo y sociedad en Centroamérica, 1870-1930: una historia común y divergente," in *Las repúblicas agroexportadoras*, edited by Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, vol. 4 of *Historia general de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 11-110; Víctor Hugo Acuña and Iván Molina, *Historia económica y social de Costa Rica 1750-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1991); Héctor Pérez, "Crecimiento agroexportador y regímenes políticos en Centroamérica. Un ensayo de historia comparada," in *Tierra, café y sociedad*, edited by Héctor Pérez and Mario Samper (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 25-54; and Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costa Rica (1800-1850): el legado colonial*, 1st ed., 1st reprint (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica), 239-282.

period, the Partido de Nicoya was the frontier between two different colonial jurisdictions—Panama and Nicaragua—and two viceroyalties—Peru and New Spain. In the post-independence period, it became a disputed borderland between two national states in formation. Even today Guanacaste plays the role of a multinational border, as its international airport functions as entrance for the flood of thousands of foreign tourists, and the land border with Nicaragua receives a continuous flow of Nicaraguan immigrants looking to improve the conditions of survival for their extended families back home.

Based on trade and migration circuits, the pre-Hispanic Nicoya region can be delimited as comprising the Nicoya peninsula and the plains directly to its north, plus the Gulf of Nicoya and its immediate eastern coast. This territory coincides with the southern part of *Gran Nicoya*, and the southern frontier of Mesoamerica. In contrast, the early colonial *Corregimiento* or *Alcaldía Mayor de Nicoya* and the late colonial Partido de Nicoya included only the peninsula and the territory to the north of Tempisque River.

What is today the eastern part of Guanacaste (Bagaces), along with the eastern shore of the Gulf of Nicoya, belonged then to the colonial province of Costa Rica. Today's province of Guanacaste resembles the Pre-Hispanic Nicoya region, excluding the southern part of the peninsula, which is under the administration of the province of Puntarenas.


Costa Rica
International boundary
Province boundary
National capital
Province capital
Railroad
Road
0 25 50 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles
NICARAGUA
Lago de Nicaragua
Caribbean Sea
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
PANAMA
ALAJUELA
HEREDIA
GUANACASTE
PUNTARENAS
LIMÓN
CARTAGO
SAN JOSÉ
Golfo de Papagayo
Golfo de Nicoya
Golfo Dulce
Bahía de Charco Azul
Nueva Guinea
Rivas
San Juan del Sur
Colón
La Cruz
San Carlos
Los Chiles
San Juan del Norte
Hacienda Murciélago
Liberia
Coco
Guardia
Cañas
Arenal
Pital
Puerto Viejo
Quesada
Guácimo
Tamarindo
Santa Cruz
Nicoya
Puerto Jesús
Barranca
Puntarenas
Grecia
Alajuela
Heredia
Siquirres
Matina
Puerto Limón
Naranjo
Jabilla
Santiago
San José
Turrialba
Liverpool
Cartago
San Ignacio
Atalanta
Puerto Viejo
Uatsi
Katsi
Elena
San Marcos
Puerto Quepos
San Isidro
Dominical
Almirante
Palmar Sur
San Vito
Bajo Boquete
Drake
Rincón
Golfito
Corredor
Puerto Jiménez
La Concepción
Puerto Armuelles
Río Frío
Río San Juan
Río San Carlos
Río Chirripó
Río Tempisque
Río Pirrís
Río Sixaola
Río General
Río Reventazón
Pan American Highway
Base 801015 (A05363) 7-87

Pre-Hispanic Nicoya: A "Service Station"

The pre-Hispanic inhabitants of Nicoya maintained exchanges with peoples from different places and with different cultural backgrounds. The Nicoya region is considered the southern frontier of ancient Mesoamerican culture, although there is ongoing debate surrounding the level of political linkage between the Nicoyan populations and Mesoamerica at the moment of the arrival of Spaniards.[2] It is certain, though, that the area comprised of Nicaragua's Pacific coast and Nicoya, including the Nicoya peninsula and the eastern coast of the Gulf of Nicoya, had been receiving waves of immigrants of Mexican origin since 800 A.D., and by the early sixteenth century Aztec merchants traveled regularly between Guatemala and Nicoya.[3] According to Linda

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[2] According to Robert Carmack, the ancient northwestern limit of the Costa Rican world has been a matter of scholarly debate. Some scholars consider that before the moment of the arrival of the Spaniards, the political entities of the Nicoya peninsula had already been integrated into the Costa Rican world system and separated from the Mesoamerican political entities of the Nicaraguan Pacific Coast by an extended uninhabited area. For others, the Tempisque River basin and the northwestern coast of the gulf were occupied by Mesoamerican political entities, and the interior villages belonged to the Costa Rican world system. According to Carmack, recent studies suggest that the Chorotega on the eastern coast of the Nicoya Gulf had separated from the Mesoamerican world and belonged to the Costa Rican *cacicazgo* system. Robert Carmack, "Perspectivas sobre la historia antigua de Centroamérica," in *Historia Antigua,* edited by Robert M. Carmack, Vol.1 of *Historia general de Centroamérica,* coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 301. Frederick W. Lange, has questioned the "traditional" wisdom of the Nicoya region as the southern boundary of Mesoamerica. See Frederick W. Lange, "The Bay of Salinas: Coastal Crossroads of Greater Nicoya," in *Paths to Central American Prehistory,* edited by Frederick W. Lange (Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 122. Oscar Fonseca has shown that the Pre-Hispanic Nicoyans also interacted with the Andean Area. See Oscar Fonseca Zamora, *Historia Antigua de Costa Rica: surgimiento y caracterización de la primera civilización costarricense* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1996), 34, 39, 46-49.

[3] Carmack, "Perspectivas sobre la historia antigua de Centroamérica," 307. See also Eugenia Ibarra Rojas, *Fronteras étnicas en la conquista de Nicaragua y Nicoya: entre la solidaridad y el conflicto 800 d.C. – 1544* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 208; Linda A. Newson, *The Indian Survival in Colonial Nicaragua* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 28. For other important explanations of pre-Hispanic Nicoya, see Francisco Corrales Ulloa, "Más de diez mil años de historia precolombina," in *Costa Rica: estado, economía, sociedad y cultura desde las sociedaes autóctonas hasta 1914,* coordinated by Ana María Botey Sobrado (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1999), 25-65; Oscar Fonseca Zamora, *Historia antigua de Costa Rica: surgimiento y caracterización de la primera civilización costarricense* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1996); and George Haseman and Gloria Lara Pinto, "La zona central: regionalismo e interacción," in *Historia Antigua*, edited by Robert M. Carmack, vol. 1 of *Historia General de Centroamérica,* coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994).

Newson, Olmec oppression ousted the Chorotega and the Nicarao from Soconusco and forced them to emigrate to the south.[4] At the moment of the Spaniards' arrival, the Nicarao were partially occupying territories between the isthmus of Rivas and the Tempisque River basin in Nicoya, probably including the Bagaces area, and the Chorotega in Nicoya inhabited most of the peninsula and a smaller area on the eastern coast of the Gulf.[5]

Archaeological research suggests that the Mexican and Mayan influence in the Nicoya region's ceramic production from 800 to 1200 A.D. was due to the Chorotega, who had passed through the Mayan area on their way south. After 1200 A.D. the Mayan features in Nicoyan ceramics disappeared but the Mexican ones continued, as the Aztecs began to expand systematically their regular commercial networks to include the Nicoya peninsula from 1300 A.D. on.[6] Nicoya interacted with Mesoamerica but also maintained exchanges with the Central Highlands and Atlantic Watershed of what is today Costa Rica. In these relationships, Caldera and the Tárcoles River represented natural points of transit from the Nicoya region to the highlands.[7] Based on archaeological evidence,

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[4] Linda Newson, *The Indian Survival*, 32. The *Nicarao* language came from the Aztec family. *Chorotega* is a generic term to refer to the Mesoamerican population that spoke *Otomangue* languages. Oscar Fonseca and Richard Cooke, "El sur de América Central: contribución al estudio de la región histórica chibcha," in *Historia Antigua*, edited by Robert M. Carmack, vol. 1 of *Historia General de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 219; Linda Newson, *The Indian Survival*, 28; Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 49-51; Elías Zamora Acosta, *Etnografía histórica de Costa Rica, 1561-1615* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1980), 60; and Robert Carmack, "Perspectivas sobre la historia antigua de Centroamérica," 295-296.

[5] Carmack, "Perspectivas sobre la historia antigua de Centroamérica," 297; Newson, *The Indian Survival*, 28, 33.

[6] George Hasemann and Gloria Lara Pinto, "La zona central: regionalismo e interacción," 178 and 187. See also Ibarra, *Fronteras*, 53.

[7] Michael J. Snarskis, "Patterns of Interregional Contacts as Seen From the Central Highlands-Atlantic Watershed of Costa Rica," in *Inter-Regional Ties in Costa Rican Prehistory*, ed. Esther Skirboll and Winifred Creamer, Papers presented at a symposium at Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh,

students of the pre-Hispanic and colonial periods have identified Nicoya as a center where traveling merchants and troops rested and got supplies to continue their journey. This coincides with the perception of Spanish conquistadors upon their arrival.[8] In addition to this role as service station, the pre-Hispanic town of Nicoya with its market place—*tianguiz*—was one of the region's most important centers for the exchange of goods in pre-Hispanic times, especially after 800 A.D.[9]

Wars of expansion were an important part of the region's history from 800 A.D. up to the arrival of Spaniards in the sixteenth century. The chiefdoms built alliances in order to defend their common interests and territorial integration, and ethnic identities playing an important role in people's everyday lives.[10] The Nicarao fabricated maps of leather to mark their territories and to record information about geographical characteristics of the territory in order to facilitate warfare.[11] In-depth studies of the pre-

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April 27, 1983 (Oxford: B.A.R. International Series 226, 1984), 38. On exchanges between the Pacific North and Central Highlands, see Eugenia Ibarra, "El intercambio y la navegación en el Golfo de huetares (o de Nicoya) durante el siglo XVI." *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 17 (1988): 35-67; Snarskis, 41. According to Corrales and Quintanilla, the Central Pacific of Costa Rica actively participated in the interchange of products with *Greater Nicoya region*. See Francisco Corrales Ulloa and Ifigenia Quintanilla Jiménez, "The Archaeology of the Central Pacific Coast of Costa Rica," in Lange, ed., *Paths to Central American Prehistory* (Niwot, Colorado: the University Press of Colorado, 1996), 116-117. See also Ibarra, "El intercambio y la navegación."

[8] Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 64. According to Frederick W. Lange, the Bay of Salinas played a role as a crossroads within Greater Nicoya. See Frederick W. Lange, "The Bay of Salinas: Coastal Crossroads of Greater Nicoya," 139. According to Ibarra, records show Nicoya still played the role of 'despensa' during most of the seventeenth century. Ibid., and "El intercambio y la navegación en el Golfo de huetares," 48-50.

[9] Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 64. In their *tianguiz*, Nicoyan natives sold baskets made from *palma*, white blankets, hammocks, cotton, sandals and beans. The market of Nicoya received black ceramics, salt, pearls, gold, shells, corn, cocoa, tallow, and honey, among other goods from Chira Island. As a supplier for travelers, Nicoya enjoyed an excellent location with access to the sea, which also aided the circulation of gold as result of exchange activities. Ibid., 67.

[10] The Nicarao fought against the Chorotega and the Chontales, while the Chorotega also counted the Huetar among their enemies. See Newson, *Indian Survival*, 60; and Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 74.

[11] Eugenia Ibarra, *Las sociedades cacicales de Costa Rica: siglo XVI* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990), 132.

Hispanic societies of the Nicoya Region confirm the region's function a contact zone or crossroads and as a dynamic multiethnic and multicultural frontier zone tying together broad cultural areas of the pre-Hispanic Americas.

The Spaniards

The Gulf of Nicoya first became important to Spaniards because of their early obsession with finding a water passage from one ocean to another. After they realized there was no such a passage, the gulf's importance consisted in serving as the main entrance to Nicaragua for those coming from Panama. Some travelers on their way from Panama to the north preferred arriving at the Gulf of Nicoya and continuing by land, rather than going on by sea.[12] Many adventurers and explorers passed through the town of Nicoya to get supplies for their journey. A Spanish traveler, Castañeda, wrote to the Crown in 1529 that those arriving at Chira Island continued their passage by boat to the town of Nicoya to get food provisions for the 35-*legua* trip to Nicaragua. The *cacique* of Nicoya gave them Indians to serve food and provide shelter.[13]

The population of Nicoya at the moment of the arrival of Spaniards has been estimated at between 62,692 and 125,385.[14] However, the wars of conquest, epidemics,

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[12] The reason to disembark in the Gulf of Nicoya was that from November to February it was dangerous to continue northward by sea, because strong winds in the Gulf of Papagayo made navigation difficult. See Luis Fernando Sibaja and Chester Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1980 – 1st ed. Comisión Nacional de Conmemoraciones Históricas - Imprenta Nacional, 1974), 26.

[13] Carlos Meléndez, *Costa Rica: tierra y poblamiento en la colonia* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1978), 144; Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 25.

[14] Linda Newson includes in her calculus the territories comprising the "present-day cantons of La Cruz, Liberia, Carrillo, Santa Cruz, Nicoya, Nandayure, and the Nicoya peninsula, and the island section of Puntarenas." See Newson, *Indian Survival*, note on p. 88. On population and *encomienda* in Nicoya, see Luis Fernando Sibaja, "Los indígenas de Nicoya bajo el dominio español, 1522-1560," in *Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos*, 11, no. 32 (1982).

slavery, and overall exploitation of native labor quickly diminished the population.[15] Sixty years later only 1,800 natives were left. From 1524 onward Nicoya became a region that provided slaves and tribute in agricultural products to the *encomenderos* of León and Granada, and the conquered Nicoyan peninsula soon became a region of small isolated settlements. The only Indian village was Nicoya, which functioned as the point of contact for the extraction of Indian labor and agricultural products.[16] Important shipyards added dynamism and mobility to the area of the Gulf of Nicoya.[17]

After conquering the Pacific coast of Nicaragua and Nicoya, Spaniards "reduced" into slavery a large part of the population, shipping the natives to other territories such as Panama and South America.[18] Nicaraguan and Nicoyan natives were forced to participate in the conquest of Peru. Spaniards captured people in their villages regardless

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[15] For example, epidemics of fever affected Costa Rica and Nicoya in 1573. Zamora, 73; Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 1973), 42. The following epidemics affected Nicaragua in the first years after conquest: measles (1520-1523 and 1533), small pox (1529), and bubonic plague (1531). It is likely that these epidemics were present also in Nicoya. See Eugenia Ibarra, *Las manchas del jaguar: huellas indígenas en la historia de Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1999), 32; and Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica Since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 45.

[16] Elizabeth Fonseca, *Costa Rica colonial: la tierra y el hombre*, 3. ed. (San José, Costa Rica: EDUCA, 1986), 55-56.

[17] There were three shipyards in the area of the Gulf of Nicoya in the sixteenth century. See Claudia Quirós, *La era de la encomienda* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990); 145-147. Shipbuilding activities declined after 1610 because Nicoya could not compete with Guayaquil, which had become an important center of shipbuilding in South America. Ibid., 156.

[18] According to Murdo MacLeod, "[t]en thousand slaves per year for the decade between 1532 and 1542 would certainly seem to be a low figure, and a total of two hundred thousand Indians for the whole Nicaraguan slaving period appears to be conservative." See MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 52; see also Claudia Quirós, *La era de la encomienda*, 11. According to Linda Newson, between 200,000 and 500,000 Indians were exported as slaves from Nicaragua and Nicoya. See Newson, *The Indian Survival*, 105. Newson also argues that the Indians of Nicaragua and Nicoya suffered most in Mesoamerica during the first three decades of Spanish rule. The demographic and cultural changes were disastrous for aboriginal population. For example, Nicoya's population declined from more than 6000 in 1522 to only 600 in 1548. See Newson, 110. See also Luis Fernando Sibaja, "Los indígenas de Nicoya bajo el dominio español," 26-30. More on slavery in Nicoya, see Carlos Meléndez, "La primera etapa de la encomienda de indios en Nicoya, 1524-1545," *América Indígena* 43, no. 1 (Jan.-March 1983): 200-202.

of their personal or family circumstances, branding their cheeks or thighs; African slaves led the Indians in chains to the ports.[19] The conquest of Peru thus proved deadly for Nicoya's and Nicaragua's populations. For example, in 1530, Hernán Ponce de León and Hernando de Soto sent two ships full of natives to Panama and Peru, forcing Nicoyans to serve as beasts of burden in the Isthmus of Panama to load and carry the southern treasures and products from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic to be exported to Spain.[20] Slavery was perhaps the greatest single cause of the demographic collapse in the Nicoya region during the first four decades of conquest and colonization.

Those who managed to stay and survive did not do much better. Upon conquest of Nicaragua and Nicoya in 1524, the conqueror Hernández de Córdoba distributed the first *encomiendas.* Henceforth the non-enslaved natives became part of *encomienda*, or had to pay tribute, which sometimes included turning other natives in as slaves.[21] The *encomienda* system organized the exploitation of native labor and lives through the authority of individual Spanish grantees, or *encomenderos*. *Encomienda* resembled certain pre-Hispanic economic relations under which commoners had to pay tribute to the *cacique* (chief), yet as executed in the context of conquest, demographic collapse, and intercultural domination it was extraordinarily exploitative. The Indian villages in the Nicoya Region most likely to be converted into *encomiendas* were those with a large

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[19] Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 132-133. See also Claudia Quirós, *La era de la encomienda*, 29.

[20] The *Real Cédula* of September 9, 1536, prohibited sending slaves out of Nicaragua. See Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, p. 24.

[21] Wendy Kramer, W. George Lovell and Christopher H. Lutz, "La conquista española de Centroamérica," in *El régimen colonial (1524-1750)*, edited by Julio Pinto Soría, vol. 2 of *Historia general de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 42-43. For more on *encomienda* in Nicoya, see Sibaja, "Los indigenas de Nicoya bajo el dominio español," 30-43.

number of inhabitants, located near the coast or a convenient port.[22] Nicoya became a royal *encomienda*, which meant that no Spaniards were officially allowed to establish their residence in the village, and theoretically should have prohibited private exploitation. Yet somehow *Gobernador* of Nicaragua Pedrarias Dávila and his wife ended up appropriating enormous amounts of riches extracted from Nicoya.[23]

Even as *encomienda* reconfigured the surviving indigenous society and economy, cattle ranching, introduced by the Spaniards, began dramatically to transform the region's landscape, spreading grassland and scrubland where forests once had grown.[24] In a few short decades, Nicoya became an important part of the Spanish Pacific coastal maritime system: manufacturing ships, producing goods for everyday consumption that were exported to Panama and Peru. In 1562, the residents of the first Spanish town in the Central Highlands of Costa Rica, Castillo de Garcimuñoz, informed the King that there were wonderful natural ports on the Pacific coast facilitating connections to Lima.[25] Four years later, the son of conquistador Gil González Dávila referred to Nicoya as a center where Spaniards used to wait for ships to continue their journeys;[26] and in 1572 the Father Estrada Rávago stated that the Nicoya region was an extremely accessible

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[22] Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 138.

[23] Isabel de Bobadilla, widow of Governor Pedrarias Dávila, became owner of the *encomienda* of Nicoya and Chira after her husband's death in 1532. Eugenia Ibarra notes that "todavía en el año 1536, el oro llegaba a manos de los indígenas de Nicoya por antiguas rutas de intercambio… ese oro pertenecía a Isabel Bobadila, encomendera de Nicoya." Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 137.

[24] Murdo MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*; Claudia Quirós, *La era de la encomienda*; Ibarra, *Las sociedades cacicales.*

[25] Carta del Cabildo del Castillo de Garcimuñoz al rey. El Castillo de Garcimuñoz, 22 de agosto de 1562. Guatemala, 44. Quoted by Elíaz Zamora, *Etnografía histórica de Costa Rica*, 33.

[26] "Relación circunstanciada de la provincia de Costa-Rica, que envió Juan Dávila.—Año de 1566," in León Fernández, *Colección de Documentos para la Historia de Costa Rica*, vol. 3, 2.ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1883), 36.

point on the maritime path with Panama and Peru.[27] Spaniards used the pre-Hispanic exchange routes for both local and long-distance connections.[28]

The conquest of Nicoya preceded that of Costa Rica by almost half a century. In 1519, González Dávila reported his first—and very successful—contact with the chief of Nicoya, in which the *cacique* and his subjects accepted Christianization and donated a considerable amount of gold to González Dávila. The conqueror wrote that about six thousand people became Christians along with the *cacique* at this time.[29] His good relations with the Nicoyan *cacique* allowed González Dávila to seek shelter in Nicoya when he and his army were later furiously attacked by the *cacique* Diriangen in Nicaragua.[30] Although González Dávila claimed to have successfully Christianized the

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[27] "Descripción de la provincia de Costa-Rica, hecha por el licenciado Juan de Estrada Ravago, y dirigida á Madrid al M.R.P. fray Diego Guillén, comisario de la provincia de Cartago y Costa-Rica.—Año de 1572," in: León Fernández, *Colección de documentos para la historia de Costa-Rica*, vol. 3, 7; cited also in Quirós, *La era de la encomienda,* 149. Estrada's description of Costa Rica may be exaggerated, but he accurately characterizes the northern Pacific region's connection with colonial trade routes. See León Fernández, *Colección de documentos para la historia de Costa-Rica*, vol. 3, 6-7. The accessible location of Nicoya on the Pacific route also attracted British pirates, who attacked and plundered Nicoya and the surrounding ports in the seventeenth century. For example, in 1684, after ransacking the coast of Peru, Captain Cook moved on to Nicoya, but was rejected by the Indians who bravely stole four of the pirates' canons. The Nicoyan Indians defended their village and Spaniards against the pirates in several occasions. The town of Esparza on the other shore of the Nicoyan Gulf likewise became victim of pirate attacks in 1685 and 1686, and its residents had to flee to the countryside. As a result, the town was depopulated. See Fernández Guardia, *Cartilla histórica de Costa Rica,* 5ª ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Librería Lehman, 1927), 52.

[28] Eugenia Ibarra, "El intercambio y la navegación en el Golfo de huetares," 38. On the trade colonial trade between Nicoya and Central Valley see Juan Carlos Solórzano, "El comercio de la provincia de Costa Rica, 1690-1760" (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universdad de Costa Rica, 1977); "Comercio y regiones de actividad económica en la Costa Rica Colonial," *Geoistmo* 1, no. 1(1987): 93-110; "El auge mercantil en el contexto del crecimiento económico: Costa Rica 1750-1800," *Avances de Investigación* (Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, Universidad de Costa Rica) no. 55 (1991).

[29] According to González Dávila's account the Nicoyan chief gave him "de presente 14 mil castellanos de oro, y se tornaron cristianos 6 mil y tantas personas, con él y sus mujeres y principales; quedaron tan cristianos en diez días que estuve allí, que cuando me partí me dijo el Cacique que pues ya él no habría de hablar con sus ídolos, que me los llevase, y dióme seis estatuas de oro de grandura de un palmo y me rogó que le dejase algún cristiano que le dijese las cosas de Dios, lo que yo no osé hacer por no aventurarle y porque llevaba muy pocos." See Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste* (San José, Costa Rica: Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deportes, 1974), 18.

Nicoyans, Fernández de Oviedo wrote some years later that even though Nicoyans called themselves Christians, very few of them actually were such. According to Fernández de Oviedo,

> ...llámanse chripstianos desde que Gil Gonçalez anduvo por allí; pero yo creo que hay pocos dellos que lo sean. Son ydólatras é tienen muchos ydolos de barro é de palo en unas casillas pequeñas é baxas que les haçen dentro del pueblo, allende de sus casas prinçipales de oraçion, que llaman teyopa en lengua de Chorotegas, y en la de Nicaragua archilobo.[31]

On his way to Panama in 1529, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo recorded perhaps the most detailed existing description of the recently conquered Nicoyans.[32] Unlike some Spanish chroniclers who never visited the Americas, Fernández de Oviedo's account is based on personal observations and on his participation—from the natives' perspective, as a representative of the conquerors—in Nicoyan daily life and celebrations. Fernández de Oviedo and his travelmates experienced fearful moments while observing the natives get drunk in celebration of something Spaniards could not comprehend.

> ...á una parte de la plaça començaron á cantar é andar en corro en un areyto hasta ochenta ó çient indios, que debían ser de la gene comun é plebea, porque á otra parte de la plaça mesma se sentó el Caçique con mucho plaçer é fiesta en un duho ó banquillo pequeño, é sus prinçipales é hasta otros septenta ú ochenta indios en sendos duhos. E començó una moça á les traer de beber en unas higüeras pequeñas, como escudillas ó taças, de una chicha ó vino quellos haçen de mahiz muy fuerte é algo

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[30] Ibarra, *Fronteras étnicas*, 91. In spite of González Dávila's initial enthusiasm about his successful trip in Nicoya region, the process of colonial settlement did not begin until 1524, when Francisco Fernández de Córdoba founded Villa Bruselas on the eastern shore of the Gulf of Nicoya. According to Ibarra, the Nicoya Chorotegans gave in so easily in because they lived between two enemy groups, the Nicarao and the Huetar, and believed alliance with Spaniards would make them stronger with respect to these enemies. Ibid., 132.

[31] *Costa Rica vista por Fernández de Oviedo*, introduction by Carlos Meléndez Chaverri (San José, Costa Rica: Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deportes, 1978), 48-49.

[32] *Costa Rica vista por Fernández de Oviedo*, 35-53. Fernández de Oviedo, as many others who passed by Nicoya, arrived there to take a ship to Panama along the Pacific coast. See also *Nicaragua en los cronistas de Indias: Oviedo*. Introducción y notas Eduardo Pérez Valle. Serie Cronistas N°3. (Managua, Nicaragua: Banco de América, 1976), 89.

> açeda, que en la color paresçe caldo de gallina, quando en él deshacen una ó dos yemas de huevo. É assi cómo començaron á beber...[33]

Natives drinking and smoking were to be disdained but not feared, but when they began to cry and scream for reasons utterly opaque to the watching Spaniards, the Spaniards got worried. Such fanatical drinking could mean the foreign observers were in danger.[34] To Fernández de Oviedo and his companions the menace seemed imminent, and they decided that the best tactic would be to kill the *cacique* and those nearest to him first, assuming that the common people would not know what to do without their leaders:

> Bien pensamos una vez quel areyto y embriaguez avia de ser en daño de los seys ó siete españoles, que allí nos hallamos, é por esso estuvimos en vela é con las armas en la mano, porque aunque no bastássemos á defendernos de tantos contrarios, á lo menos pensábamos venderles bien caras nuestras vidas, é procurar, todos de matar al Caçique é los que más pudiéssemos de los prinçipales, sin los quales la otra gente inferior son para poco, é muy desacaudillados é cobardes sin sus capitanes.[35]

Ultimately, though, the spree ended peacefully when the drunken Indians collapsed and their relatives and friends took them home. It seemed not to be the first time there were international observers to their festivities. Fernández de Oviedo's account suggests that Nicoyan natives were accustomed to foreigners observing their everyday life: the locals were not inhibited by the foreign presence. Worse, they did not pay attention to the strangers! It was the lack of consideration that bothered the Spaniards.

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[33] *Costa Rica vista por Fernández de Oviedo,* 43.

[34] "…y en aquel tiempo quellos se están emborrachando mucho más, porque quanto más nos era encubierto el dubdoso fin de la fiesta, tanto más era de temer el peligro en que nos paresçia que estábamos." Ibid., 44.

[35] Ibid., 44-45.

The next day, Fernández de Oviedo scolded the *cacique*, telling him that drunkenness was bestial rather than Christian behavior. The *cacique* answered that he had no choice, because if he eliminated the festival his people would start to hate him and end up leaving the village. However, he promised Fernández de Oviedo that he would gradually try to get rid of the custom.[36] One might ask why the *cacique* seemed to have so little authority over his people. Was it because the Spaniards and not the traditional council of elders had selected this man for the role of *cacique*?[37] Or were the *cacique*'s disclaimers mere excuses, a way to maintain Chorotega *fiesta* customs in the face of foreign occupation?

Over the course of the sixteenth century Nicoyans adapted to the dramatically changing exigencies of survival under Spanish rule, a process glimpsed with varying degrees of insight by the foreigners who passed through their territory. The Spanish author Juan López de Velasco actually never visited Nicoya or the Americas, but based on travelers' and chroniclers' reports he portrayed Nicoyans as loyal and obedient "before justice," but very poor because they were slothful and lovers of idleness ("haraganes y amigos de holgar"), a claim totally contrary to the natives' real circumstances under Spanish rule.[38] Under the system of extreme exploitation imposed, only dead Nicoyans had the opportunity to be idle. Spanish invasion and impositions led to rapid acculturation but also generated resistance—as the persistence of Chorotega *fiesta* practices in the face of Spanish pressure attests. Fernández de Oviedo wrote of the

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[36] Ibid., 45.

[37] Newson, *The Indian Survival*, 114. Newson also states that the Chorotega were more democratic in the political structure than the Nicarago. See Newson, 56.

[38] Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 45.

loincloths worn by Chirans and Nicoyans[39], but acculturation advanced over the following century: in 1613 Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa described Nicoyan natives as very "ladinized," their clothing in the Spanish style, although made of local cotton.[40] As an important textile center Nicoya produced very fine cotton blankets and other fabrics. Vázquez de Espinosa also depicted Nicoya as an important shipyard, with abundant and excellent wood supplies for shipbuilding, circumstances that made Nicoya an important center for the colonial Pacific coastal trade routes.[41]

In the early seventeenth century the village of Nicoya was under the religious rule of the Franciscan order, while the Crown's authority was enacted by the *alcalde mayor*, who made the most of his position as the Crown's badly paid employee by exploiting Indian labor.[42] Irish monk Thomas Gage, passing through Nicoya in 1636, observed the abuses committed by the *alcalde mayor* against the native people. Although Gage's account was shaped by anti-Spanish prejudice, and indeed became a seminal work in the creation of the "black legend" of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas, Costa Rican historian Carlos Meléndez and others have judged Gage's account an accurate description

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[39] Fernández de Oviedo wrote of the Indians of "Sanct Lúcar" and Chira in the Nicoya Gulf: "traen las indias unas bragas pintadas, que son un pedaço de tela de algodon de muchas labores é colores, cogido en un hilo que se çiñen; é este tela es tan ancha como dos palmos, é por detrás baxa desde la çinta é métenla entre ambas piernas é passa delante, é alcança a cubrir el ombligo é ponerse debaxo del mesmo hilo ó çinta, é assi cubren todas sus partes vergonçsas: todo lo demás de las personas traen descubierto é desnudo." *Costa Rica vista por Fernández de Oviedo*, 23. The description of the Nicoyans was very similar: "Las mugeres traen una braga muy labrada, ques unmandilejo de tres palmos, cosido en un hilo por detrás; é çeñido el hilo, métenlo entre las piernas é cubren la natura, é meten el cabo debaxo de la çinta por delante. Todo lo demás de la persona andan desnudas." Ibid., 48.

[40] *Compendio y Descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, transcrito por Charles Upson Clark, Published by the Smithsonian Institution, Washingon, 1948, 242-243, in Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 49-50.

[41] Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 51.

[42] In Nicoya, the representative of the Crown was *Alcalde Mayor* or *Corregidor*, one of whose duties was to administer the Crown's *encomienda*.

of Nicoyan natives' misery under Spanish colonial rule.[43] *Alcalde mayor* Justo Salazar exploited Nicoyans as slaves; the (Portuguese) priest denounced him and urged the Indians to disobey his demands. In response the *alcalde mayor* almost killed the priest, cutting off two of his fingers in a fight. It was the Indians who protected the priest, managing to separate the two and secure the furious priest behind a locked door.[44] According to Gage, many Indians, Spaniards, blacks, and *mulatos* alike sought the priest's services, confirming that an important population of African descent existed in Nicoya in early colonial times.[45] The priests who defended the local population against the *alcalde*'s excesses also participated in the extralegal exploitation of Indian labor, receiving their share of tribute.[46]

As in pre-colonial times, the colonial Nicoya region was a Central American crossroads, traversed by the land route from Panama and Costa Rica to Nicaragua and to the capital of the Kingdom of Guatemala. According to royal instructions, where roads passed by Indian villages, the native members of the *cabildo* had to provide accommodation and services to travelers, who paid taxes to the Crown.[47] Some families in the colonial village of Nicoya were forced to serve as innkeepers, providing food and

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[43] Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 56.

[44] Ibid., 58. See also Edelman, *Logic of the Latifundio*, 46.

[45] Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 59. Edelman has explained the presence of this African-origin population by the policies of *reducciones* that limited the possibility of exploiting indigenous inhabitants as a labor force for the expanding cattle ranches. Edelman, *Logic of the Latifundio*, 46, 48-49.

[46] The parish priests participated in the reassessments of Indian tribute, usually accompanied by corruption. See Newson, *Indian Survival*, 155 and 274.

[47] See Elizabeth Fonseca, Patricia Alvarenga and Juan Carlos Solórzano, *Costa Rica en el siglo XVIII* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001), 198-199.

shelter and also beasts of burden and horses for long-distance travelers passing through.[48] There was constant maritime traffic between Nicoya and Panama, and the ships' crews and passengers stayed in the town of Nicoya, the administrative center of the region: "Corte de estas comarcas," in Gage's phrase.[49] According to Gage, salt, honey, corn, wheat, chickens, and purple dye made from mollusk shells were all exported to Panama from the Nicoya Gulf and its surroundings. Gage emphasized the coercion that undergirded this commerce.

> …el Alcalde Mayor emplea a todos como esclavos, a hilar para él una cierta yerba que llaman pita, mercancía muy estimada en España y particularmente la que está teñida en Nicoya y sus contornos con color de púrpura: para este efecto una cierta cantidad de indios están obligados a ir a los bordes del mar para buscar a estas conchas con las que se hace la tintura de púrpura.[50]

The Indians were forced to spin and dye fine textiles exported by the *alcalde*. Textiles dyed with the local purple were luxury goods only enjoyed by the richest nobles in Spain:

> El paño de Segovia que está teñido con ella, se vende hasta a veinte escudos la vara a causa de la riqueza de esta tintura; y no hay más que los grandes señores de España que lo usen, como lo hacían en otro tiempo los nobles de Roma en donde se le daba el nombre de púrpura de Tiro.[51]

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[48] Quirós, *La era de la encomienda*, 214.

[49] See Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 60. See also Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca, "Los años finales de la dominación española, 1750-1821," in *De la ilustración al liberalismo, 1750-1870*, edited by Héctor Pérez Brignoli, vol. 3 of *Historia general de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 43.

[50] Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 60-61.

[51] Ibid., 61. In the early nineteenth century, Captain Blanco confirmed that the dye continued being extracted and employed by the Indians, who used cotton clothes dyed with blue from indigo and purple from shells. See José Antonio Blanco, "Con la fragata Joaquina en el Puerto de Culebra (1807)," in ibid., 121.

Chroniclers' and travelers' accounts as well as archaeologists' studies reveal that although the post-conquest demographic collapse had seriously diminished the traditional dynamism of the Nicoya region, it continued receiving travelers and traders, and still functioned as a service station where voyagers from different backgrounds met and received shelter, food, and provisions to continue their journeys.[52] As noted above, Nicoya was also an important center of shipbuilding. Colonial travelers provide a picture of Nicoya as a lively Indian town frequently receiving travelers and traders from other latitudes, who continued their journey in a few days—or weeks, if the bad weather conspired against safe journey by sea.

Not only did the Nicoya region serve as a crucial link between Panama and Nicaragua in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but it maintained active commercial relations with Costa Rica's Central Valley. In 1788, the governor of Costa Rica, José Antonio Oreamuno, lamented that too much *dulce* (brown sugar loaf) was exported to Bagaces, Nicoya, and Rivas, causing a shortage in Costa Rica.[53] Tobacco was exported to Nicaraguan markets via Nicoya, and there also were some tobacco fields in Bagaces. In 1762, residents of the village of Barba in the Central Highlands reported that they exported *dulce*, sugar, tobacco, and wheat flour to Nicoya and Nicaragua.[54] At the end of the colonial era, Nicoya continued to be the route of access to Nicaragua and other provinces of the Kingdom of Guatemala, and also became a point of attraction for

[52] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 39-40.

[53] Iván Molina, *Costa Rica 1800-1850: el legado colonial y la génesis del capitalismo*, 1st reprint (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998), 21. See also Juan Carlos Solórzano, "Comercio y regiones de actividad económica en la Costa Rica colonial," 93-110.

[54] See León Fernández, 1998, 393, cited in Marco Antonio Fallas, *La factoría de tabacos de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1972), 31.

Nicaraguan elites increasingly involved in selling cattle to the markets of Guatemala City and San Salvador.[55]

Late Colonial Nicoya

By the mid-eighteenth century, the booming cattle economy of the Pacific Coast of the Central American isthmus had prompted the colonization of the northern part of Nicoya. The Nicoyan cattle estates usually belonged to absentee owners residing in *Villa de Nicaragua* (Rivas), León, or Granada. In the rainy season flooded rivers cut off the cattle estates, making land transport impossible. The owner and his family would reside in a distant town and employ an administrator—frequently a black or *mulato* (person of partial African origin)—to take care of the ranch. The Tempisque river basin was especially attractive for cattle growers, as the river supplied water even during the dry season. The late colonial cattle boom led to a dramatic acceleration of the appropriation of land by non-Indians in Nicoya, a process that had begun in the early colonial regime through the mechanism of royal land concessions.[56]

The cattle economy became the principal feature of what would become Guanacaste, leaving a lasting imprint in the environment, land tenure patterns, and—consequently—social structures of the colonial Partido de Nicoya.[57] The initial

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[55] See Juan Carlos Solórzano, "Los años finales de la dominación española," 16.

[56] Ibid., 35; Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 42. See also Elizabeth Fonseca, *Costa Rica colonial*, 259-264, and David Díaz Arias, *Hacienda Pacífica*, manuscript, 2005.

[57] The most important studies of cattle economy, hacienda, land tenure, and socio-political relations in Guanacaste have been done by Gudmundson and Edelman. See Lowell Gudmundson, "Apuntes para una historia de la ganadería en Costa Rica, 1850-1950," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, no. 17-18 (1979): 61-81; "Las luchas agrarias de Guanacaste, 1900-1935: campesinos parcelarios y de hacienda, respuestas al capitalismo agrario y al reformismo político," *Estudios Sociales Centroamericanos* 32 (1982): 75-95; *Hacendados, politicos y precaristas: la ganadería y el latifundismo guanacasteco 1800-1950* (San José:

introduction of cattle by the Spanish in the sixteenth century had brought about a fundamental transformation of the region's landscape. It was a radical change. During the decades of 1560 to 1570, Spaniards introduced cows, horses, donkeys, pigs, goats, and hens; domestic animals soon supplanted wild ones as a source of meat. Cows and pastures became the dominant sight. The transformation of rich forest into poor grasslands through cattle grazing led to the acceleration of soil erosion and other profound ecological changes.[58] Nicoya's cattle ranches exported tallow and mules for cross-isthmian transport in Panama and, in the later colonial period, exported cattle to the marketplaces of the cities of Guatemala and San Salvador as well. According to Marc Edelman, the type of extensive cattle raising practiced in Andalucía became a model for the cattle economy in colonial Spanish America [59]

In the early eighteenth century, cattle ranches exporting tallow to Panama covered the Bagaces Valley.[60] As only the tallow and hides were sold, the rest of the animal was

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Editorial Costa Rica, 1983); and Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*. Other important works on the topic are Mario Matarrita,"La hacienda ganadera en el corregimiento de Nicoya" (Thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1980); Wilder Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera en Guanacaste: aspectos económicos y sociales 1850-1900* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1985); Elizabeth Fonseca Corrales, *Costa Rica colonial*.

[58] Carolyn Hall, *Costa Rica: A Geographical Interpretation in Historical Perspective.* Dellplain Latin American Studies, No. 17 (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 86-87.

[59] Citing Bishko (1952), Edelman states that "[t]he peculiar feature of Andalusian cattle raising, which distinguished it from the stock-raising practices of the rest of Europe, was the economic importance of beef and hide production and the lack of integration of dairy or crop agriculture with herding." See Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 47.

[60] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*. 40. According to Murdo MacLeod, "From La Caldera tallow, suet, hides, biscuit, and flour were the main exports, and small vessels plied up and down the coast with fair frequency. By 1640 the two valleys of Landecho and Bagaces… were teeming with cattle." See Murdo MacLeod, 275. Bagaces was an Indian village, and the construction of a chapel for Saint Joseph was authorized in 1730. See Miguel Morales and Gerhard Sandner, eds., *Regiones periféricas y ciudades intermedias en Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1982), 215. See also Juan Carlos Solórzano, "Los años finales de la dominación española," 43. The Bagaces Valley does not have precise limits, but it includes the territory between the mountain range of Guanacaste and the Tempisque River, and extends

left to rot. In 1731, the British traveler Cockburn saw large herds of wild cattle slaughtered by Indians in the Tempisque Valley for their tallow and hides; the meat was left for the vultures.[61] From 1730s onward, though, tallow exports to Panama diminished notably. In 1736 ships had ceased coming from Panama to Nicoya to buy tallow, and it was said that there was no more tallow because the cattle had disappeared.[62] Quirós and Solórzano have shown, however, that the reason for the scarcity of tallow was that cattle was being exported on hoof to the north, as the booming indigo economy in Nicaragua and El Salvador increased demand for food there.[63]

The mid-eighteenth-century opening of Guatemalan markets for cattle imports, together with the diminution of the Nicoyan population, together shifted the center of the Nicoyan economy from the peninsula to the Tempisque Valley.[64] Consequently, new settlements appeared and grew in the territory between Rivas and Nicoya.[65] Nicoya had been the only village on the peninsula until 1769, when the settlement of Guanacaste was established.[66] Spanish law mandated a division of residence between Spaniards and

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from the Gulf of Nicoya to the town of La Cruz. Wilder Gerardo Sequeira Ruiz, *La hacienda ganadera en Guanacaste*, 33-34.

[61] León Fernández, *Historia de Costa Rica durante la dominación española* (Madrid 1889), 315; Carlos Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 76. See also Marc Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 50-51, and Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costa Rica (1800-1850)*, 72.

[62] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 41-42.

[63] Claudia Quirós, "Aspectos socioeconómicos de la ciudad de Espíritu Santo de Esparza y su jurisdicción (1574-1848)," (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1976) cited in Juan Carlos Solórzano, "El comercio de la provincia de Costa Rica," 152-153. See also Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costa Rica (1800-1850)*, 72.

[64] Mario Matarrita Ruiz, "La hacienda ganadera," 48-50.

[65] See Roberto Cabrera, *Santa Cruz, Guanacaste: una aproximación a la historia y la cultura populares* (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Guayacán, 1989), 47-49.

[66] Fonseca, Alvarenga and Solórzano, *Costa Rica en el siglo XVIII*, 72-73; and Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 43-44.

Indians—the system of "the two republics"—and Nicoyan Indians did not approve of *ladinos*' residence in their village. (The term *ladino* was used in this region to denote all Spanish-speaking non-Indians; although their individual ancestry and economic status varied, *ladinos* were united in their Hispanicization and their exemption from the tribute and labor obligations that Indian legal status imposed.) Until the first decades of the eighteenth century the *corregidor* and the Franciscan friar had been the only Spaniards living in the town of Nicoya, but from that moment onward others began to arrive. The visiting bishop Morel de Santa Cruz counted one hundred Indian and twenty *ladino* huts in Nicoya in 1751, and mentioned that the Indians did not like the *ladinos* to move into their town. Worried about *ladino* access to church and priest, the bishop proposed the creation of a new village for *ladinos*.[67] In the late eighteenth century a new *ladino* settlement emerged between Nicoya and Guanacaste.[68] Following the efforts of two *corregidores* to obtain the Crown's permission to found a *ladino* village in place called "antiguo paraje de Diriá," the first mass was finally celebrated in a newly built church on the site in 1805. The new village received the name of Santa Cruz in 1814.[69]

The economic and demographic growth of Central America stimulated the economy and created new population centers in the late eighteenth century Partido de Nicoya. Both Nicoya and Santa Cruz were more populous than Guanacaste, a settlement

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[67] Obispo Morel de Santa Cruz, "Visita Apostólica, topográfica, histórica y estadística de todos los pueblos de Nicaragua y Costa Rica, 1751," in Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 103. Ladino presence continued causing rejection of the Nicoyan Indians in 1828. See ANCR Municipal 431, f71-72v.

[68] There were several haciendas and "sitios" nearby Nicoya in 1751, owned by *rivaseño* elites: Manuela Angulo, the owner of hacienda "Las Cañas," with 100 cows, 30 mares, an ass, 12 calves and 10 mules; Bernarda Martínez, the owner of the hacienda "Santa Bárbara," with 60 cows, 50 mares, calves and mules; Joseh De La Cerda, the owner of the hacienda "San Andrés" with 80 cows; among others. The list of *ladino* hacienda owners, founders of Santa Cruz, can be found in Roberto Cabrera, *Santa Cruz*, 47-48.

[69] Ibid., 58. For more detailed account of the foundation of the town of Santa Cruz, see ibid., 49-67.

that consisted of only four huts in 1778: most of its permanent residents were servants and workers on haciendas owned by the Rivas elite.[70] Repeated pirate raids around the lake of Nicaragua had caused many wealthy families from Granada to move to Rivas, which became an important center of cacao production.[71] Seeking other territories in which to raise cattle for export to Salvadoran and Guatemalan markets, the Rivas elite began acquiring lands to the south, ultimately spreading cattle ranches and settlements from Rivas to the northern part of Tempisque River. During the second half of the eighteenth century, then, the northern part of the Nicoya District came more effectively under the influence of Rivas: eighteen large cattle estates in the Nicoya District belonged to families from Rivas by 1778.[72] There were few inhabitants in these new settlements other than *mandadores* and other hacienda workers, and those permanently living there were extremely poor.[73]

While large haciendas were being formed in the region from the Tempisque River northward, land was more evenly distributed in the area between Santa Cruz and Nicoya. In the last years of colonial regime, then, Guanacaste and its surroundings became the seat of the large landowners, Santa Cruz and Nicoya places of smallholders. As a result of the shifts in the cattle economy the Rivas elite came to dominate in the territory between Tempisque River and the town of Rivas, while the central and southern parts of

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[70] Meléndez, *Costa Rica: tierra y poblamiento en la colonia*, 149-155.

[71] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 44; Germán Romero Vargas, *Las estructuras sociales de Nicaragua en el siglo XVIII* (Managua: Vanguardia, 1987), 177.

[72] One example of Rivas elites who became large landowners in Partido de Nicoya was Francisco Orozco, member of Rivas town council from 1751 to 1771, who acquired first 33 caballerías in Bagaces in 1775, and the following year, 43 caballerías in *el sitio* of San José de Asiento Viejo in Nicoya. Ibid., 209.

[73] Ibid., 237.

the Nicoya peninsula were more closely tied to Costa Rica and its tobacco industry.[74] Nicoya had gradually lost its importance as the administrative center of the Partido de Nicoya, and in 1804 the local Spanish authority asked to be transferred to Guanacaste; the Audiencia of Guatemala acceded in 1806.[75] The displacement of Nicoya as the center of the Partido in the late colonial period also affected the relationship of the Partido to the Costa Rican state, as the southern part of the peninsula kept its close ties with the Costa Rican Central Highland economy, while the northern part was tightly linked to Nicaragua.

At the end of the colonial period, the Partido de Nicoya and Bagaces Valley had consolidated their role as cattle producers for the northern markets. The late colonial population of the future province of Guanacaste was mainly mixed people of Indian, *mulato,* and in to a lesser degree of Spanish origins. Africans had participated as slaves in the conquest of Nicoya and the Gulf islands, and now their descendants and those of other, more recent arrivals were employed as administrators of the cattle estates on the plains of Nicoya. The colonial period established the baselines of the ethnic composition of postcolonial Nicoya. From 1790 to 1800, between 77 and 94% of the baptisms in Guanacaste parochial records corresponded to *mulatos*; they comprised not only the

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[74] Carlos Meléndez, "La verdad histórica en torno a la anexión del Partido de Nicoya a Costa Rica," in Meléndez, *Costa Rica: tierra y poblamiento en la colonia*, 206. Meléndez's article was first published in *La Nación*, in July 25, 1963. Marc Edelman has shown that the different land ownership structures in the northern Tempisque Valley and the Nicoya Peninsula had already taken form by 1761, when the Alcaldía Mayor de Nicoya produced its first cattle census. See Marc Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 45, and Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 44-45. On tobacco production in Costa Rica, see Marco Antonio Fallas, *La factoría de tabacos de Costa Rica*.

[75] Rocío Vallecillos Fallas, "El trasado de Nicoya a Liberia. Tierra fértil," *Revista de la Asociación de Genealogía e Historia de Costa Rica* n.1 (1996): 49, cited in Julio César Jaén Contreras, *El Partido de Nicoya y su integración a Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2000), 44.

subaltern class but also a sizeable portion of the local elite.[76] Other sources suggest that the majority of elites in the late colonial Partido de Nicoya were *mulatos*.[77] According to Bishop Thiel's later assessment, *mulatos* were the overwhelming majority (85%) of the population of the Partido de Nicoya, Bagaces and Cañas by 1801. (Table 1.1) [78]

	Spanish		Indian		Ladino Mestizo		Mulatto Zambo Pardo		Total
Nicoya	18	0,5 %	662	19 %	8	0,2 %	2731	80,1 %	3410
Guanacaste	45	4,9 %	47	5 %	30	3,3 %	790	86,6 %	912
Bagaces	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	672	100 %	672
Cañas	0	0 %	0	0 %	0	0 %	425	100 %	425
TOTAL	63	1,2 %	709	13 %	38	0,7 %	4619	85,1 %	5429

Table 1.1 Population of Nicoya, Guanacaste, Bagaces, and Cañas in 1801, according to Bernardo Augusto Thiel. Source: *Revista de Costa Rica en el siglo XIX*, 6.

The transfer of the administrative center from Nicoya to Guanacaste by the Crown produced resentment, which played a role in the later process of annexation of the Partido

[76] Based on information provided in Carlos Meléndez, *Costa Rica: tierra y poblamiento en la colonia*, 157. In 1807, a Spanish captain made the following observation: "Estos hombres constan de tres castas, que son indios tostados y oscuros, mulatos y blancos, que por la mayor parte son un español adulterado con las castas anteriores. Su idioma es castellano, pero tan corrompido con la lengua de este país, que hace fastidiosa la conversación." José Antonio Blanco, in Carlos Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, 122

[77] Lowell Gudmundson, "Expropiación de los bienes de las obras pías en Costa Rica, 1805-1860: un capítulo en la consolidación de una élite nacional," in *Hacendados, políticos y precaristas,"* 17-71. The group of elites who declared the annexation of Nicoya to Costa Rica in 1824 was composed of *mulatos*. Claudia Quirós, personal communication December 2004. For the agency of *mulato* and free blacks in the first republic in Cartagena, Colombia, see Alfonso Múnera, *El fracaso de la nación: region, clase y raza en el Caribe colombiano, 1717-1810* (Bogotá, Colombia: Banco de la República – El Áncora Editores, 1998).

[78] Bernardo Augusto Thiel, "Monografía de la población de Costa Rica en el siglo XIX," in *Revista de Costa Rica en el siglo XIX* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1902), 6. Thiel's sources are not known. He probably used estimations. Unfortunately there is no way to get information about the ethnic composition of Guanacastecans during the nineteenth century because the three censuses (1864, 1883, and 1892) did not record ethnicity, race, or color. The next census reporting ethnicity was that of 1927, which clearly defined the province of Guanacaste as *the* mestizo province of Costa Rica. However, the concept of mestizo was ambiguous, usually just referring to the mixing of natives and Spaniards. Thus the label erased the African ancestry of the population of Guanacaste.

de Nicoya to Costa Rica.[79] Rivalries between the dominant groups of different localities were common in the post-independence Central America and fundamentally shaped the national states in formation. In Nicaragua tensions became polarized between the elites of León and Granada. In Costa Rica there were armed conflicts between the four principal towns of the Central Valley—San José, Cartago, Heredia and Alajuela—between 1822 and 1835. The elites of the towns and villages in the Partido de Nicoya sustained similar enmities. These contentions determined post-colonial political processes in this frontier region and ultimately drove the process of annexation of the Partido to Costa Rica.

Annexation to Costa Rica: Political Events and Their Discursive Uses

The debate between Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans over the annexation of Nicoya probably will never end. Every July 25th, Costa Ricans tell and retell the glorious story of the *voluntary* annexation of Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica, while Nicaraguans lament the loss of Guanacaste at the rapacious hands of their insatiable neighbor. Year after year the media and school systems in both countries recite what they consider historical facts in order to justify one or another position, convinced that that history supports today's demands. A careful study of historical documentation, however, reveals that the annexation was neither a trouble-free voluntary act nor simply a forced subjugation.[80] Only a few studies without nationalist motives have been done of the complex process of

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[79] Jáen Contreras, *El Partido de Nicoya*, 76-79. The Congress of the Central American Federation separated the "district of Guanacaste" from the "Partido de Nicoya." Nicaraguans have usually made the same distinction. See Miguel Ángel Álvarez Lejarza, *De cómo perdimos las provincias de Nicoya y Guanacaste* (Managua, Nicaragua: Academia de Geografía e Historia de Nicaragua, 2001).

[80] Or, as Nicaraguan historian Frances Kinloch has put: "ni rapto a medianoche ni amor a primera vista." *Semanario Universidad Digital*, del 14 al 20 de julio de 2005, Año 9, Edición 452 http://www.semanario.ucr.ac.cr/delau.html as on July 14, 2005.

annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica.[81] To understand such historical processes, it is necessary to look at the diverse and often conflicting interests behind different groups' positions and actions. The elites of different villages of the Partido de Nicoya held differing political allegiances after the fall of colonial rule. Frances Kinloch has convincingly argued that there was no such thing as loyalty to a national state in Central America at the time of the annexation. Patriotism as loyalty to a national state was unknown, as we see, for example, in the express desire of Guanacastecan power holders in 1838 to choose freely between the two states if they came to war over the "district."[82] Identities or possible feelings of belonging will not help us explain why these local elites decided to join one state or another, and—especially—why they changed their minds as time went on. Rather than a problem of identities it was a question of political and economic interests and power. There were no national identities at that moment, and even if there were, to explain the allegiances and loyalties of local elites in terms of "identities" would risk tautology. The different and changing attitudes

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[81] Sibaja and Zelaya's careful study already made it clear, in the 1970s, that the history of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya is not a simple one. See Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya.* Frances Kinloch has analyzed Costa Rica-Nicaragua relations after the annexation. Frances Kinloch, "Política y cultura en la transición al Estado-Nación, Nicaragua 1838-1858 (M.A. Thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1999); "Conflictos limítrofes y discurso nacionalista. La frontera Nicaragua-Costa Rica 1824-1858," in *Las fronteras del istmo: fronteras y sociedades entre el Sur de México y América Central*, edited by Philippe Bovin (México: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social - Centro Francés de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos, 1997); and *Nicaragua: identidad, cultura y política, 1821-1858* (Managua: Banco Central de Nicaragua, 1999).

[82] "Acta en la que la Ciudad de Guanacaste ratifica por tercera vez la Anexión a Costa Rica, 11 de setiembre de 1838," in Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 153-154. Another example of the lack of loyalty to a national state was that some military leaders of Granada presented the idea of annexation of the entire Eastern department of Nicaragua to Costa Rica, in order to end the rivalries between León and Granada after the defeat of William Walker in 1857. See Kinloch, "Conflictos limítrofes," 105; and Kinloch, "Política y cultura en la transición," 192; and *Nicaragua: identidad, cultura y política*, 270. The letter of José María Cañas responding to the Nicaraguans (Fernando Guzmán, Fulgencio Vega, J. Miguel Bolaños, Agustín Avilés, Máximo Espinosa and Agustín Alfaro) can be found in ANCR Guerra y Marina 4754, f8v, May 26, 1857. I am grateful to David Díaz Arias for a copy of the transcription of Cañas's letter.

toward the Costa Rican state were based on the different and changing economic and political interests of the elites of Nicoya and Guanacaste.

Andrés Reséndez has studied how the residents of Mexico's Far North frontier appropriated identities under the influence of two basic forces: state and market. Reséndez argues that "these two forces conditioned the identity choices of the frontier residents in certain fundamental ways."[83] The way in which the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica occurred supports Reséndez's explanatory model. Residents of the Nicoya peninsula preferred Costa Rica mainly because of their economic and trade nexus with the Central Valley economy, while Northern Tempisque residents (centered around Guanacaste) were more closely tied to Rivas and the Nicaraguan economy and, consequently, rejected membership in Costa Rican state.[84] Within a few years, however, the "principal men" of Guanacaste changed their minds. According to many Nicaraguan historians and publicists, the Costa Rican state used violence to achieve this decision. Although the change did have to do with the second component of Reséndez's model—the state—it was not achieved mainly by violent means. While Costa Rica experienced only a few armed skirmishes in its early process of state formation, Nicaragua saw continuous civil war; ultimately, fears that the war could

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[83] Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3-4.

[84] Since the late eighteenth century, an official tobacco warehouse in Nicoya was supplied from Costa Rica. Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 67. Nicoyan elites expected the Costa Rican state to help them to build productive infrastructure and schools. At the same time, they were worried about possibility that the internal conflict in Nicaragua would spread to Nicoya. Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 68. According to Arturo Taracena, the Nicoyan elite defended their interests, tied to the commercial network with Cartago and Alajuela, although many of them were originally from Rivas, and the territorial modifications between 1821 and 1842 responded to the commercial relations within the province. See Arturo Taracena Arriola, "Historia política de Centroamérica (1821-1930)," in *Encuentros con la Historia*, edited by Margarita Vannini (Managua, Nicaragua: Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua, Universidad Centroamericana (UCA), 1995), 149.

spread to Guanacaste and affect business interests made the *principales* opt for Costa Rica. Linked to the force of the state were the forces of the market, as rapidly growing demand for foodstuffs in Costa Rica's Central Valley opened a dynamic new market for Guanacastecan cattle. The new possibilities offered by the growing Central Valley markets affected the decision of Guanacastecan elites to choose allegiance to Costa Rica over Nicaragua.

Nationalist historiography in each country has consciously and conscientiously masked the complexity of the annexation process by employing only part of the historical documentation in order to argue the nationalist position, building a political discourse in favor of one country and against the other. Scholarly consensus, in any case difficult on this specific matter, would not serve the manipulative purposes of politicians in each country.

Chiapas had been the first *cabildo* in the Kingdom of Guatemala to follow Mexico's example and declare independence from Spain in 1821. Chiapanecan elites then decided to become part of independent Mexico and asked the rest of the *cabildos* of the Kingdom of Guatemala to follow their example. When Guatemalan authorities then declared independence from Spain in September 1821, each local *cabildo* had the opportunity to decide what to do. Most of them decided to join the newly formed independent Mexican Empire, but some *cabildos* decided not to adhere to Mexico. In Nicaragua a mayor schism arose between the two principal towns of León and Granada over postcolonial political organization. The *cabildo* of León chose independence without adherence to Guatemala or Mexico, while the Granadan elites preferred to follow Guatemala and become part of the Mexican Empire. The conflict between the elites of

these two towns would define Nicaragua's history in the decades after independence from Spain.[85] The rivalry and its bloody consequences became one of the explicit reasons Nicoyans decided to adhere to Costa Rica in 1824.

In March 1824, the Costa Rican government invited the *ayuntamientos* of the Partido de Nicoya to join the Costa Rican state. Hesitation followed, as the Partido's municipalities could not agree on which state to join. The Municipality of Nicoya rejected annexation to Costa Rica on April 4, 1824, but accepted it on July 25 of the same year.[86] The Federal Congress decreed the temporary annexation of Nicoya and Santa Cruz to Costa Rica on January 29, 1825, and that of the entire Partido on December 9, 1825; the Senate of the Federal Republic ratified the decision on March 18, 1826.[87] Santa Cruz had first accepted union with Costa Rica, but later rebelled against the Federal decision.[88] Throughout 1825 the Costa Rican state did not have a real presence in the

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[85] According to Bradford Burns, Nicaragua went through an extremely long transition from patriarchal governance in a city-state structure to the contractual state, a transition that he sees as occurring only between 1857 and 1858. See Bradford Burns, *Patriarch and Folk: The Emergence of Nicaragua1798-1858* (Cambridge, Massachusetts – London, England: Harvard University Press, 1991), 2. Costa Rican elites had expressed their desire to include the Partido de Nicoya in the state of Costa Rica as early as 1822. See Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "La invención de la diferencia costarricense, 1810-1870," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 45 (Jan.-June 2002): 196.

[86] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 143.

[87] "…que los Pueblos de Nicoya y Santa Cruz deben considerarse interinamente agregados á este Estado hasta la resolución definitiva de los Altos Poderes, y por tanto deben protejerse con circunspección, tino, y prudencia como se protejería otro cualesquier punto que formase parte integrante del Estado Costarricense." Costa Rica. *Colección de Leyes y Decretos, 1824-1826*, 93. "Por ahora y hasta que se haga la demarcación del territorio de los Estados, que previene el artículo 7° de la Constitución, el Partido de Nicoya continuará separado del Estado de Nicaragua y agragado al de Costa-Rica." Quoted in Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 71.

[88] Mayor of Nicoya, Roque Rosales, wrote that when the Costa Rican state invited Guanacastecan inhabitants to join it, Nicoya accepted "desde el principio y en totalidad" and Santa Cruz accepted "en principio" but later "comenzó a introducirse el influxo [sic] del Guanacaste en aquellos vecinos." When the Federal Congress made the decisión to accept the annexation in December 1825, the Costa Rican government asked the *jefes políticos* in the Partido de Nicoya to guarantee the fulfilment of the federal order. Roque Rosales commented on the order: "En vista pues de tal orden pasé a la Villa de S.ta Cruz cumplir con ella la lleve desobedeció el Alc.e levantando una facción considerable resistiendo

Partido de Nicoya, but in 1826 it began to insist that the villages of the Partido de Nicoya swear loyalty to the Costa Rican constitution. Sibaja and Zelaya have explained in detail the process of these *juramentaciones*, which lasted about a decade with all the municipalities supporting annexation to Costa Rica by the end.

Nicaragua had requested the derogation of the annexation decree, and not only Nicaraguans and Guanacastecans but also Costa Ricans thought it was very possible that the Federal Congress would end up derogating it and returning the Partido de Nicoya to Nicaragua. The Costa Rican government prohibited the sale of lands in Nicoya because of the potential difficulties for buyers if Nicoya had to be returned to Nicaragua. On August 15, 1826, the municipality of Nicoya decided to postpone the *juramentación* there because "si el decreto resulta derogado, como probablemente se cree, se hace ridículo un acto tan sagrado…" However, the following day, Nicoyans celebrated a mass and gave their oaths of loyalty to the Costa Rican state.[89] The residents of Santa Cruz also swore loyalty to the Costa Rican constitution a couple of weeks later, although it seems that the Costa Rican government's local representatives and some Nicoyans pressured them: the oath was given some days after Nicoyan military commander Pedro Zamora, learning of the Santacruceños' hesitation to give their oath, had sent the following mandate:

> Por esta mi orden comparecerán todos los vecinos de Santa Cruz (digo los que no hubieren jurado a este pueblo el diez y seis de éste) a celebrar la

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desididamente al cumplimiento de ella lei y las ordenes de ese Govierno de tal acontesimineto se dio cuenta con el Secretario..." The mayor of Santa Cruz resisted the decision of the Federal Congress to annex the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica. Rosales said that he was ordered to make people to swear loyalty to the Constitution in all the villages, which he did with the help of troops, who stayed the time necessary to achieve the oath to the Constitution and bring calm to the Partido. There would have been no problems if the Municipality of Guanacaste had not "contaminated" the *santacruceños*, Rosales argued. See ANCR Municipal 5612, 2. It is interesting that the government made the inhabitants of the territory of the Partido de Nicoya to swear loyalty even though the Costa Rican constitution of 1825 had not recognized it to be part of Costa Rica.

[89] Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 76.

> jura el diez y siete, prometiendo a los que así lo hicieren verlos como vecinos obedientes, y a los que no, pasar con las bayonetas a esta costa, embargar sus bienes, quemar sus casas y traer sus familias a morar a este pueblo.[90]

The Costa Rican government later explained to Federal authorities that this order had not been written by the Nicoyan commander but rather by somebody originally from Rivas, residing in Guanacaste and working against the Partido's annexation to Costa Rica. The government claimed embittered Rivaseños fabricated such documents in order to make the Federal Congress to revoke the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica.[91]

The municipality of Guanacaste also did not want to swear fealty to the Costa Rican constitution before the Federal Congress's final decision about the annexation decree. Under Costa Rican government pressure, however, Guanacastecans presented their oath on September 24, 1826, but they also produced another document clarifying that they had not been able to choose freely:

> …pues si se le deja actuar con libertad (al vecindario) ni ahora ni nunca ni en tiempo alguno lo verificaría, respecto a ser gravosa la dicha agregación…[92]

Guanacastecan leaders even asked the municipality of Villa de Nicaragua (Rivas) to help them resist the annexation attempt by Costa Rica in 1826, but the Nicaraguan municipality—although willing to help—told Guanacastecans to wait for the Federal Congress's resolution regarding annexation.[93] After Nicaragua's accusations against

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[90] Costa Rica, Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1923, 301, quoted in ibid., 78.

[91] Ibid., 78-80.

[92] ANCR Gobernación 8366, f2-2v, quoted in Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 78.

their neighbor's procedures in Guanacaste, the Costa Rican government explicitly began to promote "voluntary and free" oaths of loyalty to the national constitution, asking the *jefe político* to gather the Partido de Nicoya's inhabitants together to share their opinions and collectively decide if they wanted to belong to Costa Rica or to Nicaragua. The government's letter, distributed among all the municipalities of the Partido de Nicoya, emphasized that any document had to be produced voluntarily: "deven crearse con consentimiento general voluntario y libre de los pueblos que componen el Partido."[94]

Over a decade of indeterminacy ended after all the municipalities had more or less voluntarily accepted membership in the Costa Rican state. In December 1834 the municipality of Guanacaste petitioned the Federal Congress to ratify the annexation decree, receiving the support of the municipality of Nicoya in January 1835.[95] In 1838 all three municipalities—Nicoya, Santa Cruz, and Guanacaste—once more confirmed their decision to remain annexed to Costa Rica.[96] This need to reiterate and ratify the

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[93] ANCR Municipal 5612, f6-7.

[94] According to the official order of March 18, 1828, signed by Carlos Macedo y Ugarte, it was important to listen the considered and mature opinion of the "cavildos populares" and not to use violence. See ANCR Municipal 431, 1828, f2-12v, "Ministerio General al ciudadano jefe político superior." See also fs51-51v, in which the Mayor of the *villa* of Guanacaste reports that he received the invitation to organize meetings to decide if they want to remain separated from Nicaragua, "sobre si le agrada o no continuar agregado al Estado de Costa Rica; que para el caso es de necesidad tener a la vista datos y documentos recientes y relativos para que dicha providencia tenga el devido cumplimiento é convocado a todo el vecindario para el domingo 23 del corriente el que reunido diga sin que haya la menor violencia de opinión, si quiere continuar, según se espera, agregado al Estado , y separarse para siempre del de Nicaragua; de cuyo resultado dare a U. oportuno aviso qomo se me previene." The government kept an eye on Nicoyans through the *jefes políticos*, who constantly sent mail to the government reporting the latest news from the village or town where they were posted. For example, ibid., f28-29.

[95] "Copia del Acta de la Municipalidad de la Villa de Guanacaste en la que se acuerda gestionar ante el Congreso Federal, la ratificación de la Anexión a Costa Rica, 1º de diciembre de 1834;" and "Acta de la Municipalidad de Nicoya en que se conoce de la invitación de la Municipalidad de Guanacaste para solicitar al Congreso Federal la ratificación de la Anexión a Costa Rica, 19 de enero de 1835," in Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 148-150.

[96] "Acta en la que la Municipalidad de Nicoya ratifica por tercera vez su Anexión a Costa Rica, 7 de septiembre de 1838," in Sibaja and Zelaya, *La anexión de Nicoya*, 151-152; "Acta en la que la Ciudad de

annexation so many times reveals the complexity of the long process of political hesitation.

The history of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica has been crucial to both countries' national discourses. Costa Rica has emphasized the voluntary nature of the Nicoyan annexation, while Nicaraguans have painted the annexation as a theft or violent subjugation. In 1942, Nicaraguan writer Miguel Angel Alvarez Lejarza published a book explaining how Nicaragua lost Nicoya and Guanacaste. The book soon became the cornerstone of the Nicaraguan official position on the importance of Guanacaste to the Nicaraguan nation's destiny. According to the author, Costa Rica—*the pampered child of the Creator,* as he called it, quoting a French traveler—had managed to manipulate the Federal Congress with flattery and smooth talk, practiced by their representatives in the Federal Congress while Nicaraguans killed each other back home.[97] The annexation had been carried out completely against the Partido's inhabitants' common will and by means of threat and violence, as was shown by historical documents such as the order of Nicoya military commander Pedro Zamora. Álvarez Lejarza asserted that Nicoyans had been angry with Santa Cruz and Guanacaste villagers, because these were revealing that they had been forced to consent to annexation to Costa Rica. According to Álvarez Lejarza, the inhabitants of Rivas and hacienda owners in Nicoya, worried about what was happening to their brothers in Nicoya, ending up offering military support for the dissident villages of the Partido de Nicoya "para que por la fuerza

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Guanacaste ratifica por tercera vez la Anexión a Costa Rica, 11 de setiembre de 1838," in ibid., 153-154; and "Acta en que Santa Cruz ratifica por tercera vez la Anexión a Costa Rica, 28 de setiembre de 1838," in ibid., 155-156.

[97] See Álvarez Lejarza, *De cómo perdimos,* 11 and 13.

hagan valer sus opiniones de agregacion a Nicaragua, y segregación de Costa Rica."[98] The government of Nicaragua had not, however, supported the concerned Rivas elites, and so—according to the author—Commander Zamora had had a free hand to use death threats to force the residents of Santa Cruz to swear submission to the Costa Rican state. Álvarez Lejarza was convinced that the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica was nothing other than violent conquest and enslavement:

> Aquellos esclavos que ansiaban 'la agregación a Nicaragua', quedaron sufriendo en su *nueva patria*, los mismos padecimientos que experimentaban los deportados en la Siberia…![99]

At the end of the nineteenth century, another Nicaraguan historian, José Dolores Gámez, had blamed Nicaragua's bloody civil war for the loss of Nicoya-Guanacaste. Gámez depicted the Nicaraguan civil war of 1824 as something totally irrational, and of fatal consequences:

> En la Guerra de 1824, habían combatido pueblos contra pueblos, familias contra familias, parientes y vecinos, unos contra otros, sin otro móvil que el insensato deseo de destruirse. El país quedó devastado, las haciendas abandonadas, y muchas personas ricas se encontraron sin abrigo solicitando la caridad en los caminos. Los crímenes, que no podían castigarse durante la contienda, se multiplicaron asombrosamente con la impunidad, y los asesinatos, robos y las violencias con el sexo débil, se cometieron sin restricción alguna.[100]

According to Gámez, during this violence and destruction Nicaragua lost an important part of its territory, the district of Nicoya or Guanacaste, whose inhabitants

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[98] Ibid., 22-23

[99] Ibid., 19-23.

[100] José Dolores Gámez, *Historia de Nicaragua desde los tiempos prehistóricos hasta 1860, en sus relaciones con España, México y Centro-América* (Managua: Tipografía de "El País," 1889), 369.

realized that they would enjoy peace and calm on the side of Costa Rica. And when Nicaragua tried to recover Nicoya after the civil war it was too late. Gámez asserted that "[h]oy el Guanacaste es una rica provincia de la República de Costa-Rica, y para nosotros un eterno reproche de los desaciertos políticos de nuestros primeros años."[101] For Gámez, blame lay not with Costa Ricans but with the Nicaraguans who had preferred fratricidal struggle to defending their territory's integrity. Thus, two main positions emerged in Nicaragua regarding the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica: one accusing Costa Rica of robbery and violation, and another blaming Nicaraguan leaders for the short-sightedness that led them not to fight for the province but against each other while the neighbor took advantage of the situation to steal a huge piece of Nicaragua's territory.[102]

Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, Costa Rican intellectuals and officials depicted the annexation as a demonstration of Nicoyans' collective desire to belong to the nation of Costa Rica. Any evidence—like those already mentioned above—against this version was omitted in official accounts. (Another example of inconvenient evidence of

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[101] Dolores Gámez, *Historia de Nicaragua*, 370.

[102] Some Nicaraguan historians continue reproducing Gámez's interpretation, as does Orient Bolívar Juárez, General Secretary of the Academy of Geography and History of Nicaragua, in the presentation of the second edition of Álvarez Lejarza's book: "Si algo nos dejó Nicoya y Guanacaste fue, como escribió una vez el prominente miembro de nuestra Academia don Sofonías Salvatierra, 'la experiencia, de que la anarquía, la desunión, los localismos, los egoísmos políticos, y la falta de conciliación cívica, disuelve a los pueblos, los disgrega y los condena a la muerte'." See Álvarez Lejarza, xviii. The other presentator of the same book, Ignacio Briones Torres, member of the Academy of Geography and History, expresses the first position, putting the principal blame on Costa Rican expansionism. See Ignacio Briones Torres, "Este libro," in Álvarez Lejarza, xxi-xxvi. The Nicaraguan press still affirms today Nicaragua's right to demand the 'devolution' of Guanacaste, as can be read in Nicaragua's most popular daily paper in 2005: "…no hay nada que discutir, salvo el derecho que tiene Nicaragua de recuperar los territorios de Nicoya, Guanacaste y Santa Cruz, cosa que a lo inmediato debería iniciar la Cancillería." See also Ricardo J. Guevara Altamirano, "Territorios," *La Prensa*, Nicaragua, February 24, 2005. In November 2005, even the government of Nicaragua affirmed the validity of Nicaragua's right to demand the devolution of Guanacaste. See for example, "Nicaragua reclamaría Guanacaste," *Diario Extra*, San José, November 9, 2005; "Que devuelvan el Guanacaste," *El Nuevo Diario*, Managua, November 9, 2005; and "Caldera: los insultos son falta de argumentos," *El Nuevo Diario*, November 10, 2005.

coercion was the case of the districts *La Costa* and *La Lagunilla* of Santa Cruz, whose residents were called in 1826 to swear obedience and to apologize because they had first disagreed with annexation to Costa Rica. The people of *Lagunilla* said they had been manipulated in the past but would be obedient from that moment onward, and added a request to not to be punished.[103])

Costa Rican intellectuals and politicians have stressed on the one hand, the Nicoyans' gloriously "voluntary" decision to belong to Costa Rica, and on the other, the "fact" that Nicoya had never belonged to Nicaragua, but was instead a quasi-independent "partido" in the Kingdom of Guatemala.[104] Víctor Cabrera contributed to the

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[103] Carlos Guillén Fernández transcribed in 1951 the record of the town meeting in Nicoya, September 7, 1826, signed by *jefe político* Roque Rosales, Pedro Peraza, and Juan José Viales. However, Guillén did not indicate the original archival source. Carlos Guillén Fernández, "Incorporación de Guanacaste a Costa Rica. Versión histórica." *Repertorio Americano*, August 15, 1951, 143-144. Víctor Cabrera also mentions the unwillingness of these two districts to annex to Costa Rica. See Víctor Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo del Centenario de la Incorporación del Partido de Nicoya a Costa Rica, 1824-1924* (San José, Costa Rica: Publicación de la Secretaría de Gobernación - Imprenta María v. de Lines, 1924), 19.

[104] See Marco Bermúdez, "Guanacaste nunca fue de Nicaragua," *La Nación*, July 17, 1990. The following quote illustrates the Costa Rican media's position today on the question of annexation: "Guanacaste ocupa hoy lo que hace 181 años se denominó el Partido de Nicoya, una región independiente pero que, por su ubicación geográfica, mantenía más relaciones comerciales y sociales con Costa Rica que con Nicaragua, su vecino del norte. El 25 de julio de 1824, los habitantes del Partido de Nicoya acordaron voluntariamente anexarse al territorio costarricense como una provincia más, por lo cual su escudo tiene la frase 'de la patria por nuestra voluntad.'" See "Crearán museo en provincia de Guanacaste tras 181 años de anexión," *La Nación*, July 25, 2005. Well-known Guanacastecan poet José Ramírez Sáizar expressed the following: "Cuando fuiste Alcaldía de Nicoya, tu partido se impuso en la Historia, y al gritar tu anexión a la Patria te cubriste por siempre de gloria." Quoted by Jaen Contreras, *El Partido de Nicoya*, 74. Usually both Guanacastecan and non-Guanacastecan Costa Rican publicists have affirmed that Costa Rican government accepted—and informed the Federal Government about—the voluntary annexation of the Partido de Nicoya, whose pacific inhabitants had understood the benefits of joining Costa Rica. See, for example, Salvador Villar, "Guanacaste: monografía histórica y geográfica," in *Anuario General de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Borrasé, 1934), 58. Costa Rican historian Carlos Monge Alfaro depicted the annexation as a beautiful spontaneous act. According to Monge Alfaro, the inhabitants of Nicoya had called for an open meeting to make a petition of incorporation to the state of Costa Rica. See Carlos Monge Alfaro, *Historia de Costa Rica*, 17th ed. (San José: Trejos, 1982), 190-191. The Federal Congress´ Decree of December 9, 1825 says that "Por ahora y hasta que se haga la demarcación del territorio de los Estados que previene el Art. 7° de la Constitución, el Partido de Nicoya continuará separado del Estado de Nicaragua y agregado al de Costa Rica." Monge Alfaro, ibid., 191. Monge Alfaro also stated that "debemos... rendir homenaje a los pueblos guanacastecos porque una vez declarada la independencia de Centroamérica, y de Costa Rica en particular, en distintas ocasiones se reunieron para manifestar su deseo de pertenecer a Costa Rica. Monge Alfaro, *Geografía social y humana de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa

popularization of this position with his commemorative book of 1924, in which he concluded:

> Así quedó resuelto el viejo litigio sobre el territorio guanacasteco, que durante el coloniaje dependió unas veces de la Audiencia de Guatemala y otras de la Gobernación de Costa Rica y nunca de Nicaragua. Esta Provincia ha sido siempre, pues, parte integrante de Costa Rica, por su situación geográfica y por el deseo expreso de sus habitantes.[105]

Cabrera's conclusion that the province of Guanacaste has always been an integral part of Costa Rica due to its geographic location and its inhabitants' manifest "general desire" is curious, since earlier in his book he transcribed several documents that demonstrate just how conflicted and divided Guanacastecans desires were. In his conclusion he also ignores those periods in the colonial era when the Partido de Nicoya was under Nicaraguan rule. His geographic justifications for Guanacaste's "natural" membership in the Costa Rican political community are no less curious, as he must have noticed, transcribing the documents included in his book, that for a hundred years Nicaraguans had used the same reasons to argue that Guanacaste was a "natural" part of Nicaragua. The use of history to justify present-day claims was as alive in the early twentieth century as it is today.

Usually those who argue over the annexation and rightful belonging of Nicoya-Guanacaste forget that Costa Rica and Nicaragua were not national states in the 1820s and 1830s. They were conglomerations of villages and towns not yet integrated into

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Rica: Imprenta y Librería Universal, 1942), 61. The fact that Guanacastecans had continuously to organize *juramentaciones* after 1825 reveals more hesitation than enthusiasm surrounding the decision to belong to Costa Rica. It is very difficult to surmise what the ordinary people thought about annexation. There are no sources on the opinions of day laborers, former slaves, Indians, small farmers, domestic laborers, or other subaltern sectors in this matter, or on the ways in which they may have identified themselves.

[105] Cabrera was entrusted to prepare a publication to commemorate the centenary of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica in 1924. See Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 434, and Chapter 3, below.

unified political communities, much less into national states. The overarching political project in 1824 was to build a state that could govern the entire isthmus—the Central American Federal Republic; any discussion of annexation *vis à vis* either Costa Rican or Nicaraguan national sentiment is necessarily anachronistic.

Borderlands and Postcolonial Struggles Over the State

The Partido de Nicoya went through several phases on its way to becoming the province of Guanacaste. Even before annexation, in the colonial period, Nicoya had borne multiple different statuses in terms of autonomy and authorities.[106] Soon after conquest, Nicoya came under the authority of Nicaragua, and was declared an *Alcaldía Mayor* in 1556. From 1576 to 1588 Nicaragua, Nicoya, and Costa Rica formed part of the same political entity under the authority of the Audience of Guatemala, but from 1588 to 1593 Nicoya enjoyed autonomy from both Nicaragua and Costa Rica. From 1593 to 1602 it belonged to Costa Rica, while between 1602 and 1787 Nicoya was again an autonomous entity in the Kingdom of Guatemala. In 1787 the Bourbon reforms created a new administrative organization, the Partido de Nicoya, incorporating Nicoya into the intendancy of Nicaragua.

Shortly after Nicoya's annexation, Costa Rica was divided by a decree of October 13, 1825 into two departments: Eastern and Western, with Cañas and Bagaces belonging to the Western department. There is no mention of the Partido de Nicoya, since the

[106] Carlos Meléndez has identified five different stages, while Clotilde Obregón distinguishes seven of them. See Carlos Meléndez, *Costa Rica: tierra y poblamiento en la colonia*, 146; Clotilde Obregón Quesada, *El río San Juan en la lucha de las potencias, 1821-1860* (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1993), 39-41.

Federal Congress had not yet ratified the annexation decree.[107] The Costa Rican government's Decree no. 105 of March 24, 1835 made Guanacaste the third department of the country, incorporating the *villas* of Guanacaste and Bagaces and the villages of Santa Cruz, Nicoya, and Cañas.[108] Guanacaste became the fifth department of Costa Rica in 1841, and the Decree no. 167 of December 6, 1848 divided this fifth department into five cantons: Guanacaste, Nicoya, Santa Cruz, Bagaces and Cañas.[109] At the moment of independence around 5,000 inhabitants resided in the Partido de Nicoya. The landscape was dominated by large estates of thousands of hectares; land was inexpensive and there were extensive forests to exploit.

Costa Rican historians usually argue that post-independence political power struggles were limited to the Central Valley, and that peripheries like Guanacaste remained totally isolated from and ignorant of the national political games. Yet if we reexamine national history from the province's perspective, it becomes clear that Guanacastecans played crucial roles in some of the most important moments of Costa Rican state formation. Guanacastecans eagerly participated in postcolonial struggles that determined the structure and allocation of power at the center, usually defending the established order, occasionally supporting successful challengers. Guanacastecans were well-informed and active in national politics, although physical distance sometimes

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[107] Decree no. 63 of November 4, 1825, in *Colección de Leyes y Decretos 1824-1826*, 93-94.

[108] See *Colección de las leyes y decretos expedidos por los supremos poderes legislativo, conservador y ejecutivo de Costa Rica en los años de 1833, 1834, 1835 y 1836*, Tomo IV (San José: Imprenta de la Paz, 1858), pp. 180-182.

[109] See *Colección de las leyes, decretos y órdenes expedidos por los supremos poderes Legislativo, Observador y Ejecutivo de Costa Rica en los años 1854 y 1855* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1856), 63; and Hermógenes Hernández, *Costa Rica: evolución territorial y principales censos de población 1502-1984* (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1985), pp. 32-52.

impeded them from intervening directly in events in the Central Highland capital. For various reasons, Guanacastecan elites were usually ready to defend the central government's interests, pursuing their own interests through acts of timely loyalty. Here there were none of the regionalist or provincial identities or movements that emerged in the outlying regions of some other postcolonial Latin America states. In Western Guatemala, for example, regional elites went as far as to create their own state in 1839.[110] Separatism has never been a true force or movement in Guanacaste. Carlos Granados has suggested that localism and regionalism rarely opposed the national state in postcolonial Costa Rica, where "the state did not grow at the expense of the localities."[111] Yet correspondence between the central government and local authorities certainly suggests that the relationship between these entities was vertical: the central government gave orders about how to participate in state affairs at the local level and local authorities responded, "cumplido con lo mandado."[112] Naturally, more research is needed to elucidate if this verticality was real or if the submissive language was simply a way to prevent the central government from too actively meddling in local affairs.

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[110] See Arturo Taracena Arriola, *Invención criolla, sueño ladino, pesadilla indígena. Los Altos de Guatemala: de región a Estado, 1740-1871* (San José: Editorial Porvenir; CIRMA; Delegación Regional de Cooperación Técnica y Científica del gobierno de Francia, 1997), 2.ed (Antigua, Guatemala: CIRMA, 1999). Taracena has characterized the regionalism of the Western Guatemalan elites in the following way: "Su vocación regionalista respondía, ante todo, a la exigencia de los productores y comerciantes cafetaleros, y de sus aliados locales, interesados en un ordenamiento jurídico-político más coherente con sus intereses económicos, políticos y culturales." Arturo Taracena, "El regionalismo *altense* y la élite ladina de Quetzaltenango (1880-1920)," *TRACE* 37(June 2000): 41-42.

[111] "The singularity of Costa Rica's first two decades of nation-building was the way in which the local and the national scales were combined. The state stood above and beyond the localities, but rarely interfered in local life." Carlos Granados, "Place, Politics and Nation-building in Costa Rica, 1812-1842," (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1993), 251-252.

[112] See for example, ANCR Municipal 991, f1; and ANCR Municipal 5292, f2.

Guanacaste and the Quijano Affair

The so-called Quijano invasion has been recorded by official historiography as a dangerous moment, a threat to the recent annexation of the northwestern part of the country and for to Costa Rican state's sovereignty.[113] The defeat of the invasion has served official national history as an exemplar of glorious salvation of the integrity of the nation. For the Costa Rican government of the time, it offered an opportunity to pursue its two main interests: on the one hand, to give evidence to the Federal Congress that Guanacastecans were defending their annexation to Costa Rica, and on the other hand, to demonstrate to the country's inhabitants that the government was ready and able to protect them against any external threat. Ironically, then, Quijano became a convenient agent who legitimized both the Carrillo government and the Costa Rican state's territorial desires.

Manuel Quijano had been commander of the artillery unit of the city of Cartago before being exiled for participation in a conspiracy against the government of Braulio Carrillo in December 1835.[114] On his way to exile in Nicaragua, Quijano traveled through Guanacaste, conversing with hacienda owners and with the political prisoners the

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[113] Ricardo Fernández Guardia, *La independencia y otros episodios* (San José, Costa Rica: Trejos Hermanos, 1928), 351-363.

[114] Ibid., 351. Braulio Carrillo had become chief of state in 1835, with the support of the San José merchants. He put end to the capital-city dispute in the War of *La Liga*, and imposed the central state power over other power centers. After his constitutional period of presidency, Carrillo carried out a coup in 1838. It was in his administrations that the capitalist principles began to be implemented in the country's economy, and liberal ideas adopted to regulate social relations. The figure of Carrillo has been controversial in Costa Rican history, as he inaugurated modern liberal legislation, but, at the same time, became a dictator, declaring himself president for life in 1841. Carrillo has been called the "architect of the state" in Costa Rica. See Clotilde Obregón Quesada, *Carrillo: una época y un hombre 1835-1842* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1989), 20. Manuel Quijano had been involved in practically all political power struggles since independence, originally supporting the affiliation to the Mexican Empire in 1822. See Theodore S. Creedman, *Historical Dictionary of Costa Rica*, 2nd ed., *Latin American historical dictionaries; no. 16* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1991), 230; and Monge Alfaro, *Historia de Costa Rica*, 193-197.

President Carrillo had exiled to the cattle ranches of Guanacaste.[115] Quijano and other participants in the 1835 *Guerra de La Liga* were well received in Nicaragua. When they asked Nicaraguan Chief of State Colonel José Zepeda to support their plan to invade Costa Rica and to overthrow the Carrillo government, Colonel Zepeda instead promised the support of 500 troops, weapons, and munitions if they helped Nicaragua recover the province of Guanacaste. It is not known if the expatriates accepted the terms proposed by the Nicaraguan chief of state, although early twentieth century official historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia suggests Quijano certainly might have accepted it.[116] When Costa Rican Chief of State Braulio Carrillo found out about Quijano's plans, he quickly sought from the Congress "extraordinary powers" and sent a force of 800 troops to Guanacaste.[117] The commander of the troops was Colonel Vicente Villaseñor and there were many volunteers among the troops, including some who previously had opposed Carrillo yet rejected the invasion.

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[115] Quijano spoke, among others, with Juan José Bonilla, well-known owner of the hacienda Santa Rosa in northwestern Guanacaste, who had been banished to his hacienda by the Carrillo government. In the 1830s, a common sentence for those opponents of the government who dared to take action against it, and happened to own an hacienda in Guanacaste, was to be exiled to their own haciendas in parts of the country considered remote. See Ricardo Fernández Guardia, *La independencia y otros episodios* (San José, Costa Rica: Trejos Hermanos, 1928), 351-353. Like many other peripheral regions within Latin American national states, Guanacaste was used as a place of exile and confinement. For the case of the Ecuatorian Amazonas see, Natalia Esvertit Cobes, "De la marginalidad a la nacionalización del Oriente: reflexiones sobre la violencia en la Amazonía ecuatoriana durante el siglo XIX y los inicios del XX," in *Conflicto y violencia en América: VIII Encuentro-Debate América Latina ayer y hoy*, coord. Gabriela Dalla Corte et al. (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 2002), 201-204.

[116] According to Fernández Guardia, "Quijano era capaz de eso y mucho más; no así don Joaquín Bernardo Calvo y los otros próceres que le acompañaban en el destierro…" and "[p]ara el patriotismo costarricense es muy satisfactorio que todos los hechos conocidos tiendan a probar que no faltaron a su deber; entre otros el de don Manuel María y don Telesforo Peralta, acompañados de don Manuel Zavaleta, fuesen posteriormente a ofrecer a Zepeda mil petacas de tabaco de Costa Rica a cambio del auxilio solicitado. El gobernante nicaragüense rehusó la oferta, insistiendo en la devolución del Guanacaste." Joaquín de Iglesias, José María Alvarado, Pedro Avellán, Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, Manuel María Peralta, Telésforo Peralta, Manuel Zavaleta, and Manuel Dengo were among the exiles. Fernández Guardia, *Independencia y otros episodios*, 355.

[117] "…facultades extraordinarias para sofocar cualquier movimiento subversivo del orden público." Ibid., 357.

Manuel Quijano led his troops to attack the village of Guanacaste on June 29, 1836. The *alcalde segundo* and temporary *jefe político* of Guanacaste, Juan Rafael Muñoz, later informed the central government that at the moment of the attack, the entire "cavalry"—men hastily collected from Bagaces and Cañas—got frightened and fled. With the sole help of the few Guanacastecan troops he managed to repel the enemy, who escaped and continued harassing nearby ranches in the following days.[118] Mayor Muñoz said that had he had enough guns, "no *caudillo* could have come near enough to threaten the villagers." Unfortunately the villages of Nicoya and Santa Cruz had each sent forty troops but only eighteen rifles between them, which made many militiamen desert even before any confrontation took place.[119]

The central government continued the Spanish colonial practice of granting collective titles in return for loyalty, and Guanacaste received the title of *ciudad* and a one-year tax exemption in 1836 in recognition of the villagers' successful effort to repel the Quijano invasion in defense of the integrity of the nation.[120] Quijano, for his part, had vainly expected not only the cooperation of entire department of Guanacaste but also the support of other departments and towns like Alajuela. To the contrary, his

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[118] "Informes de don Juan Rafael Muñoz al Ministro General," in: Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *Documentos fundamentales del siglo XIX* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1978), 190-191.

[119] Ibid., 191.

[120] The title of city for Guanacaste as a recognition of their loyalty was a bitter piece to swallow for Nicoyan elites, who had not been rewarded for their adherence to the Costa Rican state even though they had been the first ones to declare annexation to Costa Rica. See the Decree no. 172 of August 25, 1836, which "concede el título de ciudad a la población del Guanacaste, y exime a sus habitantes, por un año, de la contribución itineraria." *Colección de leyes y decretos 1833-1836*, 348-349. See also Francisco Montero Barrantes, *Elementos de historia de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1892), 236. When Guanacaste had already enjoyed city status for more than a year, the Decree no. 38, of November 29, 1937 gave the title of *villa* to Nicoya: "...con el fin de premiar la constante adhesión al Estado… Art. Único. Se erige en Villa el pueblo de Nicoya." See *Colección de leyes y decretos 1837-1838*, 113-114.

contemporaries and would-be allies seem to have considered him bandit without a righteous cause, and did not join his project.[121] The results of the invasion made it possible for official history to depict him as simply a bandit and thief. According to Ricardo Fernández Guardia,

> Quijano, Dengo y Avellán recorrían el departamento con su pandilla, robando los pueblos y las haciendas. El 7 de julio saquearon a Bagaces, donde había un depósito de tabaco del Estado del cual no quedó una hoja, y con el objeto de apoderarse de los caudales públicos que existían en la villa de Guanacaste, la atacaron por segunda vez el 8, saliendo nuevamente derrotados.[122]

From the point of view of the Central Highlands, the distant province of Guanacaste was a borderland, where the battle over state sovereignty was carried out in two senses: against the—imagined or real—avarice of the neighboring country, and against potential local separatist forces or desires. As Guanacaste had initially been less than united in enthusiasm for the Costa Rican state, Central Highland politicians were still suspicious of residents' fidelity to the central government. But their worries faded as the residents of the village of Guanacaste demonstrated that they were not willing to give Quijano a chance. The official Costa Rican report to the Federal Government on the Quijano incident praised Guanacastecans, who had shown their loyalty to Costa Rica by heroically rejecting the invader. According to the report, the Guanacastecans had "given proof of being true Costa Ricans":

> En tan relevantes virtudes no cede un punto del departamento del Guanacaste: su mérito es digno del aprecio y el ejecutivo os lo

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[121] The *jefe político* of Guanacaste called Quijano a "bandit" in his report to the central government. See "Informes de don Juan Rafael Muñoz al Ministro General," in Meléndez, *Documentos fundamentales*, 190-191.

[122] Fernández Guardia, *Independencia y otros episodios,* 359.

> recomienda. Sin armas y sin disciplina ha defendido, como queda dicho, el 23 de junio y el 8 de este mes la plaza de aquel nombre y los caudales públicos depositados en ella, correspondientes a la renta de tabacos; *ha dado una prueba de que son verdaderos costarricenses*, sosteniendo la dignidad del Estado, y en esto un triste desengaño a los perversos y a todos los que querían atentar contra las leyes y autoridad.[123]

The government had sent 800 troops, but after receiving the good news that Guanacastecans had already repelled Quijano, and finally convinced of the "fidelity and enthusiasm of the people of Guanacaste," the commander ordered that only two-thirds of these troops would march to Guanacaste to guard the border with Nicaragua.[124] The government troops caught up with Quijano and his troops near the border with Nicaragua, in the environs of the Hacienda Samoa, capturing three men, thirteen rifles, and all the ammunition and equipment, including Quijano's operation plans and other important documents. Among the documents were drafts of orders, communications, and letters to the Federal Government, to the Costa Rican Chief of State, and to the governor and municipalities of Guanacaste, written by Quijano to be circulated or dispatched once he succeeded in winning Guanacaste to his side.[125] It is not clear what Quijano's position was regarding the possible reincorporation of Guanacaste into Nicaragua. There are no documents with declarations from him on this issue, and no evidence to confirm that he planned to return Guanacaste to Nicaragua, as the official account has claimed.

The Quijano invasion was a good opportunity for Guanacastecans to express their loyalty to the Costa Rican state, to participate in reaffirming post-annexation Costa Rican

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[123] "Informe del poder ejecutivo a la asamblea," in Meléndez, *Documentos fundamentales*, 197.

[124] Cabrera, *Libro conmemorativo*, 408.

[125] Meléndez, *Documentos fundamentales*, 188. According to one member of Quijano's troops caught by the governmental forces, Quijano was extremely confident they would be able to occupy the village of Guanacaste without resistance. See Cabrera, *Libro conmemorativo*, 408-409.

territorial boundaries and to further the consolidation of central power against internal dissident forces. The Quijano episode and its aftermath also served the Costa Rican government as a custom-made exhibit to show the Federal Government that Guanacastecans desired to be annexed to Costa Rica. In September 1836, Costa Rican Secretary of State José Anselmo Sancho explained to the general minister of the Federation that during the threat:

> …los pueblos manifestaron tanta decisión por defender la dignidad y decoro del Estado, que no era posible hubiesen influido las perversas miras que aquel aventurero contra la tranquilidad interior; de manera que lejos de perturbarse el orden público, parece que ha recibido una nueva vida en el atentado mismo del liberticida. No obstante esto, el Gobierno recibe la misión con el aprecio y consideraciones que son debidas al primer funcionario de la República; y si aún su objeto puede ser considerado, entrará gustosamente en relaciones con las personas indicadas.[126]

Guanacastecans indeed defended the integrity of Costa Rican territory, and received recognition of the central government for that. However, when speaking to his fellow citizens at the moment of the attack, President Carrillo did not mention Guanacastecans' heroism but appropriated for the state the glorious defense of territory, people, and property:

> Costarricenses, vivid tranquilos que el Gobierno cuida de vuestra seguridad, la de vuestras familias y propiedades, en cuya conservación están cifrados su dignidad, su decoro, y el cumplimiento del sagrado deber en que se halla constituido. No, no permitirá que inmorales aventureros atenten impunemente contra el pacífico, y ocupado Costarricense: tampoco abusará del poder, como no lo ha hecho hasta ahora; porque hijo del país aprecia a sus habitantes, y no podría sufrir que lágrimas de opresión sucediesen al contento que inspira la Libertad. Tened confianza: y poneos alrededor del Gobierno, para conservar así vuestros derechos y el

[126] "Comunicaciones del Ministro General don José Anselmo Sancho al Ministro de Relaciones Interiores de la Federación," September 5, 1836, in Meléndez, *Documentos fundamentales*, 188-189.

> crédito del Estado a que pertenecéis. San José, Junio 29 de 1836. Braulio Carrillo.[127]

Carrillo offers here a kind of proto-nationalist discourse, showcasing multiple elements of subsequent nationalist enunciations: "the Government" as "son of the country"; the encomiums to "the pacific and laborious *costarricense*" (note the unitary collective subject, syntactical mainstay of nineteenth-century nationalism); the concluding insistence that "your rights" are inseparable from "the credit of the State to which you [plural] belong." It is not happenstance that this proclamation dates from a mere two years before Carrillo removed Costa Rica from the Federal Republic of Central America. What we see here, I would suggest, are the beginnings of the attempt to redefine the Costa Rican state as guardian of a national territory, a territory inhabited by national citizens who owe that—now—national state their ultimate loyalty.

Carrillo simultaneously told his people that the Costa Rican government would protect them and informed the Federal Government—via his Secretary of State—that it was the Guanacastecan people who had defended Costa Rica.[128] On the one hand, he strongly needed internal legitimation for his rule, from his nearest subjects most of all. Opposition to his San José-based government by the power groups of other Central Valley towns had lead to armed conflict—*La Guerra de la Liga*—in September and October of 1835.[129] On the other hand, Carrillo needed to show to the Federal Government that the voluntary will of the province under dispute with Nicaragua was to

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[127] "Proclama a los costarricenses," ibid., 182.

[128] See the letter of Secretary Sancho to the Federal Minister of Internal Affairs. Ibid., 187.

[129] Obregón, *Carrillo*, 47, 49-54. *La Guerra de la Liga* finished the practice, established by law in 1834, of alternating the seat of government between the four Central Valley cities (San José, Cartago, Alajuela and Heredia), and established San José as the single capital city of Costa Rica.

belong to Costa Rica. As a result of these disparate needs, his speeches and letters differed in their depiction of the Quijano events depending on to whom they were addressed.

Guanacaste and the Morazán Project

Guanacaste was also crucial to Costa Rica's political fate when General Francisco Morazán invaded the country in 1842 with plans to overthrow Carrillo's dictatorship—already opposed by wide sectors of Costa Ricans—and "reorganize" the Central American Republic.[130] Morazán arrived with five hundred men at the port of Caldera on the Pacific coast on April 7, and within a few days had convinced Carrillo's troops to come over to his side and together depose Chief of State Carrillo without bloodshed.[131] Led by the department's military commander, Guanacastecans immediately supported Morazán, who was expected to defend Guanacaste against Nicaragua's alleged plans to seize the department by military force.[132] The municipalities of Santa Cruz and Nicoya expressed their will to participate in the process of "pacification" and "reorganization of

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[130] Morazán was born in Honduras, and some historians and biographers have called him Honduran. However, when Morazán participated on the Central American political stage in the 1830s and until 1842, Central American nations had not yet been defined in such a way as to have made it meaningful at the time to classify the politicians according to their nationality. Much less can we can use such a concept of Honduran nationality in case of Morazán, whose project was to reunite the Central American states into one federal republic. A large group of military and political elites identified themselves with the Central American nation rather that the "patrias chicas," and participated in the struggle to "reorganize" the Central American union. This was the purpose of Morazán's invasion of Costa Rica in 1842.

[131] Julián López Pineda, *El General Morazán: ensayo biográfico* (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Tipografía Ariston, 1944), 111-116. Many of the Carrillo government's military officers were from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, having served the Morazán government before and been received by Carrillo as exiles in Costa Rica after the defeat of Morazán as chief of the Central American Federal Republic. According to Fernández Guardia, the fact that Carrillo put the country's two oceanic ports and the northwestern border (with Nicaragua) in hands of former Morazán men shows that Carrillo did not believe Morazan would become a threat against him. See Ricardo Fernández Guardia, *Cosas y gentes de antaño*, 2d ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Trejos Hermanos, 1939), 134-135.

[132] López Pineda, *El General Morazán,* 117.

the country."[133] The term "reorganization" referred specifically to the project to reestablish the Central American union in form of a federal republic, and thus would seem to indicate that local powerbrokers in the former Partido de Nicoya supported the reestablishment of the Central American Republic. Later events, as we shall see, call into question their commitment to an isthmian political union, and suggest that Guanacastecans supported Morazán mainly to forestall any possible military action from Nicaragua to annex the department.

While Morazán held power, Guanacaste supported him and his policies. The National Assembly of Costa Rica declared Morazán Provisional Superior Chief of State in July 1842.[134] Only five days after being named by Morazán as the new minister of the interior, General José Miguel Saravia wrote to the *jefe político* of Guanacaste that:

> Antes de ahora he manifestado a U. cuan satisfactoria ha sido para el Gral. Jefe Provisorio del Estado asi como para todos los verdaderos amantes de la propiedad del pais la conducta observada por los Pueblos del departamento del Guanacaste con el fin de obtener la renegación del Estado, y por lo mismo no me resta ahora sino añadirle que los patrioticos sentimientos que se expresan en la enunciada acta, agregando nuevos titulos á la gratitud del gobierno seran siempre inequívocos testimonios de la opinión gral. y desidida de todos los Costa Risences por el restablecimiento de la libertad y las leyes.[135]

Morazán, however, only managed to stay in power for two months, in the face of a popular uprising partially generated by his troops' bad behavior in San José.[136]

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[133] Letter from Saravia to the Political Chief of Guanacaste, ANCR Municipal 1211, f33, May 5, 1842.

[134] Saravia sent a communication to the *jefe político* of Guanacaste asking him to inform all the civil, ecclesiastical, and military authorities of the department. ANCR Municipal 1211, f38, July 16, 1842.

[135] Correspondence from the Minister of Interior to the Political Chief of Guanacaste, ANCR Municipal 1211, f26, April 19, 1842.

[136] According to Julián López Pineda, it was the "capitalists" who, reacting against the war taxes, began to work against Morazán and took advantage of the dificulties Morazán was facing in order to agitate the

Morazán ended up justifying the invasion and the assault on Carrillo's government in 1842 by saying he had taken up arms with the sole goal of defending the department of Guanacaste from the Nicaraguan threat.[137] Interestingly, soon after Morazán's defeat and execution the interim minister of the interior of the new government of José María Castro congratulated Guanacastecans for their "patriotism" and promised the government's protection for the department of Guanacaste, and at the same time, in another letter, asked the *jefe político* of Guanacaste to collect information about dissenters. According to the chief of state, dissidents demanding independence for Guanacaste were few in number but had to be controlled.[138] The existence of these separatist dissidents is questionable, however: it seems people did not reject central government authority as a whole but only that of military commander of Guanacaste Miguel Gómez, who had won the hatred of the local population by his arbitrary behavior during the days of upheaval that ended with Morazán's execution in San José.[139] No studies have been done of the level of

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masses against him: "Los enemigos de la política morazánica aprovecharon esta circunstancia para desprestigiar al Gobierno y soliviantar a las masas. Propalaron que el General Morazán trataba de sacrificar a los costarricenses, en sus bienes y en sus vidas, conduciendo al pueblo a una aventura bélica sin objeto práctico, puesto que fracasaría el esfuerzo del Jefe del Estado en lucha con los demás Gobiernos de Centroamérica." López Pineda, *El General Morazán*, 128. Carlos Meléndez, in contrast, judged that Morazán's soldiers of lower ranks caused the uprising, "porque una hueste de sus soldados y seguidores más bajos, los indios texíguats y curarenes, crearon en el pueblo de San José un ambiente de hostilidad por sus abusos y excesos, que llevó a una rebelión por entero popular." Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, "El verdadero Morazán," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 26 (July-Dec. 1992): 222-223.

[137] See Carlos Meléndez Chavarri, *Escritos del general Francisco Morazán* (Tegucigalpa: Banco Central de Honduras, 1996), 338; Adalberto Santana, *El pensamiento de Francisco Morazán*, 2.ed (Tegucigalpa, Honduras: Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán, 2000), 151. A letter from Costa Rica published in the *Redactor Oficial de Honduras* in December 1842 said that "popular insurgents" against Morazán had asked why the general had offered Costa Rica to Nicaragua. See "The Fall of Morazán," in *The Costa Rica Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, edited by Steven Palmer and Iván Molina (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 44-47.

[138] Correspondence of the Department of State to the Political Chief of Guanacaste, ANCR Municipal 1211, f49-50, December 3, 1842.

[139] Ricardo Fernández Guardia explains in detail the reasons for the local population's hatred of Lieutenant Gómez in his *Cosas y gentes de antaño*, 263-272.

involvement of the Guanacastecan population beyond military officers and rank and file soldiers in these events. It is clear, however, that Guanacastecans were not isolated from national-level political struggles, as witness their adamant rejection of the military commander because of his unjust proceedings as government representative.

Guanacastecans would continue participating in national power struggles with the leadership of the military. When a group of Alajuelans rose up against the central government in 1847, Guanacastecans were immediately ready to help the government to put down the rebellion. In this episode, existing documents show that not only the military but also the municipal councils expressed their support for the government.

Guanacaste vs. Alajuela

From the first years of annexation until the second half of the nineteenth century, local power holders in Guanacaste trumpeted their loyalty to the Costa Rican state, frequently manifesting that they preferred pacific Costa Rica to bellicose Nicaragua, with its fratricidal struggles. These declarations of submission were usually enunciated as part of the formal act of swearing the oath of loyalty to the Constitution (the *juramento*); sometimes they were just appended to official communications with other purposes.[140] There is no indication that these local power groups developed a regional identity or a

[140] *El Costarricense*, November 27, 1847, 218. On the practice of swearing oath of loyalty to the constitution in Costa Rica, see David Días Arias, "Jura y conjura en el naciente Estado costarricense: las representaciones del poder en la jura de la Constitución de 1844 y la rebelión de las autoridades militares en San José y Alajuela," mimeograph, 2005. The acts of *juramento*—or, simply, *jura*—were actually colonial practices that survived in the national period. On the practice of colonial *jura* in Costa Rica, see David Díaz Arias, *Construcción de un estado moderno: política, estado e identidad nacional en Costa Rica, 1821-1914* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, forthcoming), 6-9. The fact that the Guanacastecan elites said they wanted to belong to Costa Rica because they preferred peace and tranquility shows that the process of creation of the idea of Costa Rica as different from the rest of Central America because of its peaceful way of political life began very soon after independence. See Víctor Hugo Acuña, "La invención de la diferencia costarricense," 191-228.

sentiment of belonging to the department or province. Instead of organizing themselves around a project of regional unity, as Western Guatemalan elites did in the nineteenth century, Guanacastecan elites declared their loyalty—or *patriotism*, as they preferred to call it—to the Costa Rican state.[141] As noted above, nineteenth-century correspondence between regional power holders and national authorities was marked by a tone of deference on the part of the former toward the latter. Moreover, regional elites were willing to go beyond words and put their allegiance to the central government into action. In 1847, Guanacastecan elites prepared troops to put down an anti-government insurrection in the town of Alajuela. The Guanacastecan troops, however, never left the village of Cañas, as the government managed to subdue the Alajuelan rebels without their high-spirited help. The official newspaper *El Costarricense* described the events thus:

> …entendidas las Autoridades i pueblos del **Departamento del Guanacaste** i del Puerto de Punta-arenas del riesgo que corría el Estado, reunieron del momento sus fuerzas i llenas del entusiasmo más decidido, se pusieron en marcha para el interior con el fin de protejer la causa del Gobierno que no ha sido otra que la de la ley i del orden. Los soldados del Guanacaste llegaron á la Villa de las Cañas, en número de cuatrocientos infantes i doscientos husares, i los de Punta-arenas en el de doscientos se situaron en la Barranca, á donde les llegó órden de contramarchar i disolverse por haber cesado el motivo de la alarma.[142]

The local commander praised the troops for having marched "por caminos intransitables, á sostener la justa causa del Gobierno" and added that he had withdrawn "con la placer de haber dado una prueba irrefragable de sumisión i respeto á la Autoridad

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[141] In Western Guatemala, regional elites—a small group composed of Creole and Ladinos—sought autonomy and independence, forming the Estado de Los Altos in 1838-1840. See Arturo Taracena Arriola, *Invención criolla, sueño ladino, pesadilla indígena.*

[142] *El Costarricense*, October 2, 1847, 186-187.

i á las leyes."[143] The municipality of Guanacaste, seconded by the municipalities of Nicoya and Santa Cruz, sent the central government a declaration of praise and support:

> ...las medidas enerjicas adoptadas por el Señor Presidente, destruyeron para siempre el plan de los facciosos refractarios... que estos acontecimientos no pueden ser indiferentes á los vecinos de esta Ciudad cuya suerte ha unido á los del Estado de Costa-rica por mas de veinte años con quien le ligan las relaciones más íntimas de intereses, amistad i gratitud: que deseando por otra parte manifestar al Supremo Gobierno i al Estado entero su adhecion á las instituciones del País, i su reconocimiento al Señor Presidente del Estado por haber salvado á la Patria de los horrores de una anarquía desoladora, se acordó... Que se felicite al Benemerito Señor Presidente del Estado por los triunfos cívicos i militares que ha obtenido restableciendo la paz i el orden sin haber prodigado la sangre de los costaricenses... Que se haga presente á la soberanía del Estado por el organo que corresponde, que esta Ciudad declara su libre i espontanea voluntad, que es i quiere ser para siempre parte integrante del territorio del Estado...[144]

No studies have been done of this episode in the relationship between Guanacastecans and the central government. Guanacastecans seem to have been eager to help the central government defeat the rebels, but a half-century later historian Ricardo Fernández Guardia cast doubt of the significance of the Alajuelan uprising, suggesting that the unrest was minor, its degree of danger conveniently exaggerated by the government and Congress in order to consolidate Castro as chief of state.[145] For the purposes of this chapter it is enough to say that, again, Guanacaste was not an isolated region ignorant of central power struggles, but was instead attuned to and involved in national political upheavals.

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[143] Ibid.

[144] *El Costarricense*, November 6, 1847, 205. The spelling is from the original source.

[145] Fernández Guardia, *Cosas y gentes de antaño*, 362-363.

"Moracia"

The relationship between the frontier department of Guanacaste and the central government was especially close in 1854, during the presidency of Juan Rafael Mora Porras. Nicaragua had continued demanding the devolution of Guanacaste, and in a last attempt to gain some compensation for its loss, offered to cede Guanacaste to the Costa Rican government in exchange for 500,000 *pesos*. The Costa Ricans responded they would not buy something that was their property. The Nicaraguan proposal angered Guanacastecans, and when President Mora visited Guanacaste on April 25, 1854, the department's inhabitants greeted him with great enthusiasm: the municipality of Guanacaste asked to change the name of the department from Guanacaste to Moracia and the name of its capital from Guanacaste to Liberia, "para borrar hasta el más lejano recuerdo de sus existencia pasada."[146] Mora expressed concern over the slow development of infrastructure in Guanacaste, asking the governor of Moracia to send him a detailed description of the department's public buildings, roads, and bridges in December 1854.[147] When the Mora government taxed the provinces of the country in order to finance the war against U.S. mercenaries in 1856, Guanacaste was exempted.[148]

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[146] Lorenzo Montúfar, *Memorias autobiográficas*. Introducción Carlos Meléndez (San José, Costa Rica: Libro Libre, 1988), 277-278. Decree no. 14 of May 29, 1854, "manda denominar en lo sucesivo a la Provincia de 'Guanacaste' 'Provincia de Moracia' y a la cabecera de la misma, 'Liberia.' See *Colección de Leyes y Decretos*, 1854-55, 26-27. See also Adolfo Blen, *Historia del periodismo* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1983), 90; Rafael Obregón, *Costa Rica y la guerra contra los filibusteros* (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo histórico cultural Juan Santamaría, 1991), 6.

[147] A letter from Minister of Interior Bernardo Calvo to the Governor of Moracia declared the following: "Ordena SE. el Presidente de la Repub.a que á la brevedad posible informe esa Gobernacion del estado de las obras públicas de cada uno de los Cantones y Distritos de la Provincia, haciendo referencia de Templos, Casas de enseñanza y otros edificios que se construyen por los fondos del comun, acueductos, Puentes, etc. // Tambien quiere SE. se le informe del estado de la Composicion de los caminos del interior de las poblaciones y del resultado de la Circular n°533 de 23 de Dbre. del año ppdo." ANCR Gobernación 25332, f55, December 13, 1854.

As already seen in several important historical moments, the department of Guanacaste was not only not isolated from central government power struggles, it was an active participant in the struggles themselves. Indeed because it was a frontier region Guanacaste was even more affected than the Central Highland towns when there were convulsions in Nicaragua, or between Costa Rica and Nicaragua. Guanacastecans had had close relations with Nicaraguan population centers, especially Rivas, since the late colonial times, and many Guanacastecans—as well as Rivaseños—actually lived and did business on both sides of the border. Guanacastecans had relatives and properties in Rivas and vice versa, which meant that Nicaraguan conflicts affected Guanacastecans earlier and more often than they did the Central Highland population. In a mundane example of this ongoing reality, in 1854 the minister of the interior informed the governor of Moracia that the Costa Rican government had received a claim from the widow Ramona Muños of Liberia, whose son Ygnocente Barrios had been jailed in Rivas. According to his mother, Ygnocente was doing business in Rivas and was not involved in the local politics. Mrs. Muños had asked the government to do something to free her son. The minister noted that Mrs. Muños's son was not the only Costa Rican suffering outrages in Rivas. Many Costa Ricans citizens with no ties to Nicaraguan political parties and no involvement in "las desavenencias que lo despedazan" were being charged and fined to cover the costs of the civil war in Rivas,

> …y siendo todo contrario á los principios del derecho internacional y á los miramientos que demandan las relaciones de amistad que han existido y existen entre las Repúb.s de Costa Rica y Nicaragua y á la conducta de estricta neutralidad que en las presentes circunstancias ha adoptado la primera respecto de las cuestiones que actualmente afectan la segunda, S.E. ha dispuesto: que por esa Gobernacion se reclame oficialmente de las

[148] "Decreto que autoriza un empréstito para la guerra," in Meléndez, *Documentos fundamentales*, 266.

> autoridades que existen en Rivas la libertad del Señor Ygnocente Barrios y de otros Costaricenses que como este no han tomado parte en la política de dhas. autoridades, antes que el Gobierno se vea en la extrecha necesidad de dictar otras providencias que lleven á efecto la inmunidad de los Costaricenses en Rivas y sin perjuicio de reclamar con oportunidad los que hayan sufrido en algun concepto por efecto de la presente guerra.[149]

Decades before Costa Rica declared war against Yankee expansionist William Walker's *filibustero* government in Nicaragua, Guanacastecans had already been deeply affected by Nicaragua's internal conflicts. In 1854, the governor of Guanacaste was ordered to try to free the widow Muños's son Ygnocente, and to take other measures to defend the rights of Costa Ricans in Nicaragua. The governor of Guanacaste constantly informed the central government of border crossings by armed groups involved in Nicaraguan political struggles.[150] In the years 1856 and 1857, all of Guanacaste was affected by the war against William Walker and his mercenary troops. Although the war against the U.S. mercenaries came to be treated as Costa Rica's foundational war of independence, complete with retroactive selection of national heroes, official histories have obliterated Guanacastecans' crucial role in the conflict and all the country's formally recognized national heroes are from the Central Highlands. (Local memory preserved an alternative vision of the past: in the late 1930s, there was an attempt by some Guanacastecans of Curime, Nicoya, to name a primary school building after a

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[149] Minister of Interior Calvo to the Governor of Moracia, ANCR Gobernación 25332, f52-52v, November 20, 1854.

[150] For example, the following documents can be found in *Documentos relativos a la guerra contra los filibusteros* (San José, Costa Rica: Comisión de Investigación Histórica de la Campaña de 1856-57, 1956): "Costa Rica guarda neutralidad," Liberia, February 11, 1855, 121; "Expedición de emigrados nicaragüenses," Liberia, February 14, 1855, 122; "Regresan a territorio costarricense los emigrados nicaragüenses," February 18, 1855, 123; "El gobernador de Moracia, Don Rudesindo Guardia, informa del cruce de la frontera por tropas de Rivas," Liberia, August 4, 1855, among others.

"local hero" of the 1856 war.[151]) Guanacastecans of the rank and file received no official recognition of their role in defeating Walker, the only (modest) recognition awarded Guanacastecans being limited to the Moracia Battalion and a few of its officers, including General Tomás Guardia, scion of a rich hacienda-owning family who became president/dictator of Costa Rica in 1870.[152] The role of other Guanacastecans has been forgotten, even though the entire department was put to work for the war in order to defend the integrity and sovereignty of the nation. According to Cabrera, in Guanacaste the war against Walker mobilized hacienda laborers, cooks, oxcart men, public employees, and other sectors of civil society, including artisans working on hides and horsehair: this in addition to the province's key role in supplying agricultural products to feed the troops.[153] In 1857, the central government and local authorities corresponded actively about the disorder caused in the province by the presence of the U.S. mercenaries in Nicaragua in 1856 and 1857.[154] And in June 1861, the exceedingly indebted state

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[151] The Educational Board of Curime, Nicoya, proposed to name the community's primary school in honor of a Curimeño man, who was—according to the local oral history—the only combatant of the village who came back alive from the 1856 war against the U.S. mercenaries who had occupied Nicaragua. See *Autobiografía de D.M.I. Guanacaste. Primer Concurso Nacional de Autobiografías Campesinas*, vol. 3, Masculine, Guanacaste, Age group n. 3, p. 238-239.

[152] The grandfather of Tomás Guardia, Víctor de la Guardia Ayala, a Crown representative in León, bought land in Guanacaste and moved there with his family. Víctor de la Guardia had also been a member of the assembly that declared Costa Rica's independence from Spain and adhesion to the Central American Federation. Tomás Guardia's father, Rudecindo, worked in several posts of public administration in Guanacaste and Puntarenas. Tomás was born in Bagaces in 1831. See Donna Lilliam Cotton, "Costa Rica and the era of Tomás Guardia, 1870-1882" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1972), 33. See also Eugenio Rodríguez Vega, *Don Tomás Guardia y el estado liberal. Siete Ensayos Políticos, 1*. 2.ed. (San José: EUNED, 1989), 40; José Luis Méndez Serrano, "Don Tomás Guardia Gutiérrez, el hombre y el estadista, 1870-1882," (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1958).

[153] See Roberto Cabrera Padilla, "Apuntes y señalamientos históricos. Guanacaste en la guerra contra William Walker: el batallón de Moracia." http://www.museojuansantamaria.go.cr/memo/historiografica/roberto_cabrera.htm. Ricardo Fernández Guardia dedicated a chapter to the Moracia Battalion, paying tribute exclusively to the officers. See *Cosas y gentes de antaño*, 401-411.

[154] See for example, ANCR Municipal 4206, 1857.

compensated those who had supplied foodstuffs for the troops during the war, granting Santa Cruz inhabitants a bond of 264 *pesos*.[155]

After being deposed in 1859 and trying to recover his presidential post militarily, Juan Rafael Mora Porras met Morazán's destiny in 1860: he was executed. Part of Mora's plan to recover the presidency had been to use his popularity and that of his ally General Cañas to promote an uprising in Guanacaste that would demand the resignation of imposed president Montealegre (leader of the coup against Mora) and the restoration of Mora as president.[156] A minor upheaval did take place in Guanacaste at the beginning of 1860, when a group of people seized the barracks in Liberia, revealing not only the devotion of many Guanacastecans to Mora Porras, but also the continuation of Guanacastecans' active involvement in national politics. The Montealegre government explained this upheaval as the result of the manipulation of ignorant and humble masses by a few malcontents.[157]

In sum, nineteenth-century Guanacaste definitely was not isolated from national politics, as historians have tended to affirm. At some moments, the department became a

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[155] ANCR Municipal 2571, Year 1861, f3v. On the extremely difficult financial situation of the Mora government in war time, see Carmen María Fallas Santana, *Elite, negocios y política en Costa Rica, 1849-1859* (Alajuela, Costa Rica: Museo Histórico Cultural Juan Santamaría, 2004), 55-57.

[156] Nicaragua was supposed to help Mora and General Cañas. See Manuel Argüello Mora, *Páginas de historia* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía de 'El Fígaro', 1898), 81-82.

[157] "Desde la inauguracion del Gobierno Provisorio, el Ejército ha sido lo que debe ser, el sostén de la tranquilidad pública y el ejemplo de la obediencia a la Suprema autoridad. Ha habido, sin embargo, una ecepcion [sic] en las milicias de la Provincia de Moracia, que engañadas por algunos descontentos, se sublevaron en el mes de Enero del corriente año; pero semejante falta solo debe recaer sobre los que, abusando de la sencillez é ignorancia de las masas enarbolaron el estandarte de la anarquía para sumir al pais en el abismo de que acababa de salir." *Informe del Secretario de Estado en el Departamento de Hacienda, Guerra, Marina y Caminos de la República de Costa Rica, al Congreso de 1860*. ANCR Congreso 7018, f29-29v.

decisive factor affecting the direction of events in the state "arena of struggle."[158] In every case we have examined, their interventions aimed to maintain the stability of the central government, siding with state authorities against would-be usurpers. Guanacastecans fought against Quijano when he threatened the Carrillo government in 1836. Guanacastecan military and political leaders in supported Morazán while he was in power, then quickly moved to embrace the post-Morazanian government in 1842, and were ready to help central authorities put down an anti-government upheaval in Alajuela in 1847. Regional elites built an intimate relationship with President Mora Porras in 1854, mobilized the populace in 1856-57 to support Costa Rica sovereignty against Nicaragua-based U.S. mercenaries, and seemed originally inclined to support Mora's attempts to stay in power in the face of Central Highland opponents.

This pre-Hispanic crossroads, this region that been a nexus for commerce and communication across colonial Central American, faced a postcolonial dilemma as territory whose location within the administrative hierarchy of the Central American Federation was not predetermined by colonial precedent. After the vacillation of the 1820s, local power brokers in Guanacaste decided definitively that their best interest lay in adhesion to the Costa Rican state. They justified this choice as a rejection of the political instability and violence to the north, and certainly their subsequent actions showed a preference for stability and established authority. For the rest of the nineteenth century, Guanacastecan elites sought favor by fielding arms for the central government in

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[158] Magnus Mörner, *Region and State in Latin America's Past* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 2. Juan Carlos Garavaglia has argued that instead of spheres of power, Latin American states in the first half of the nineteenth century were instruments of power. Juan Carlos Garavaglia, "La apoteósis del Leviathán: el estado en Buenos Aires durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX," *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 1 (2003): 137. It could be said that the elite fractions in mid-nineteenth-century Costa Rica considered the state an instrument of power, and acted accordingly.

its moments of need. Thus they negotiated the political upheavals of the postcolonial period, contributing to the consolidation of a state that was just beginning to position itself as the avatar of a nation.[159]

[159] Among other such moments of struggle was the invasion of Puntarenas and Liberia by J. Fernández in October 1874, in which Guanacastecans also participated. See ANCR, Serie Guerra 4832, "Investigación, 1875."

Chapter Two

Progress Produces *Backwardness*: The Liberal State and the Province of Guanacaste

Introduction

This chapter explores how the agro-export boom and the Liberal modernization project converted Guanacaste into a backward periphery of Costa Rica. I will first examine the modernization of infrastructure in the central areas of Costa Rica in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Then I will look at Guanacaste in the same period, evaluating the province's role in the national economy and assessing the impact of public and private investment on the province's infrastructure. The final part of the chapter examines how depictions of Guanacaste by turn-of-the-century photographers rerferenced ideas of progress and modernization: in one case, for the purpose of marketing an (unrealistic) image of Guanacastecan advance as part of an overall portrait of Costa Rica as a booming nation, and in a second case, for the purpose of framing an official presidential tour of this peripheral region of Costa Rica as an adventure in a wild and backward land. This chapter tells how progress creates backwardness, and how photographers' divergent aims can create contradictory images of the past. It also captures the consonance of national and provincial elites' attitudes during the heyday of coffee and banana-driven prosperity and at the height of liberal political power: all were happy to concur that progress for Guanacaste was just around the corner. Guanacaste's cattle-ranching elite controlled the province's elective institutions and appointed posts, and rarely saw fit to complain about the national state whose local presence they themselves embodied.

The Agro-export Economy and Modernization in Costa Rica

Guanacaste became an isolated periphery within the nation-state as a result of the agro-export boom and modernization promoted in the Central Highlands by late-nineteenth-century liberal governments. The coffee-based agro-export economy developed relatively early in Costa Rica, the first Central American country to export coffee.[1] Already in 1825, the Central American Federation reported exportation of—probably Costa Rican—coffee for 3000 *pesos*, but the first real commercial exportation from Central America took place in 1832, when an important amount of coffee was sent from Costa Rica to Chile.[2] The relatively early promotion of the coffee industry in Costa Rica was carried out by a ruling class unusually united in their economic interests as well as in their understanding of what Liberal principles in state matters meant.[3]

Coffee production first took place exclusively in the Central Highlands, where the municipalities began to distribute lands immediately after independence from Spain.[4] Many of the lands used in common were considered unused—*baldíos*—by the

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[1] Costa Rica along with Brazil and Chile have been posed as exceptions within Latin America, where the period from 1821 to 1880 has been considered—following Tulio Halperin Donghi—as an era of "larga espera," during which post-independence Latin America went through very few social and economic transformations. According to the "larga espera" argument, instead of getting involved in world economy, Latin America stayed relatively isolated and internally fragmented. Historians have traditionally pointed out that Costa Rica was an exception, as it became involved in world markets relatively early through coffee exports. See Carlos Araya Pochet, *Historia económica de Costa Rica, 1821-1971* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Fernández-Arce, 1982), 3; Víctor Bulmer-Thomas, *The Economic History of Latin America Since Independence*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 43.

[2] Mario Samper K., "Café, trabajo y sociedad en Centroamérica, 1870-1930: una historia común y divergente," in *Las repúblicas agroexportadoras*, edited by Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, vol. 4 of *Historia general de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 19.

[3] See Yamileth González García, *Continuidad y cambio en la historia agraria de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1989); Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega and Iván Molina Jiménez, *Historia económica y social de Costa Rica, 1750-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1991), 115.

[4] Carolyn Hall, *El café y el desarrollo historico-geográfico de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica – Universidad Nacional, 1976), 35.

government.[5] The government of Braulio Carrillo accelerated land distribution, giving municipal and communal lands to individual owners willing to cultivate the new export crop. Boosting coffee exports also required road and railroad building, given that the principal coffee-growing areas were far from oceanic ports.[6] The most remarkable aspect of the Carrillo government was its early and forceful promotion the coffee economy: privatizing municipal and communal lands; reorganizing state finances; investing in transportation infrastructure to get the export product more quickly to the ports; and building new dock infrastructure on both the Pacific and the Atlantic coasts. In the mid-nineteenth-century coffee was transported by ox cart from the Central Valley to the port of Puntarenas, from where it was shipped via Valparaiso to Europe.[7] Around 90% of Costa Rica's total exports between 1850 and 1890 were coffee.[8] Among the consequences of coffee exports was an import boom, as coffee-buying European merchants sold manufactured goods back to Costa Rica. More than 80% of imports were consumer goods. The importation of capital assets such as metals, tools and machines

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[5] Many lands given to coffee planters had been communal lands used to gather firewood, graze animals, and cultivate basic foodstuffs. For example, the lands that Carrillo gave away in Pavas in 1841 were being used by the community. Coffee planters could simply take possession of the land and become legal owners of them five years after cultivation. See Yamileth González, *Continuidad y cambio*, 198. On the struggle of the indigenous population for their communal lands, see Margarita Bolaños Arquín, "Las luchas de las comunidades indígenas del Valle Central por su tierra communal: siglo XIX" (Master's Thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1986).

[6] The growth of the agro-export economy demanded a strong central government to build national infrastructure, as the municipalities were not able to carry out such a task. See Carlos Granados, *Place, politics and nation-building in Costa Rica, 1812-1842* (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1993), 220. Costa Rica was the first former member of the Central American Federation to build railroad. See Héctor Lindo Fuentes, "Economía y sociedad, 1810-1870," in *De la ilustración al liberalismo, 1750-1870*, edited by Héctor Pérez Brignoli, vol. 3 of *Historia general de Centroamérica*, coordinated by Edelberto Torres Rivas, 2nd ed. (San José, Costa Rica: FLACSO, 1994), 168.

[7] Most nineteenth-century coffee exports went to England, later also to Germany, and from the Second World War onwards, mainly to the U.S.

[8] Acuña and Molina, *Historia económica y social de Costa Rica, 1750-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1991), 91.

was almost non-existent.[9] Growth in exports and imports increased state revenues and thus the state's capacity to carry out infrastructure and communications improvement projects. Infrastructure modernization in Costa Rica from 1843 on was tailored to support the coffee economy and export markets.[10]

The cart road did not guarantee that coffee reached the oceanic ports quickly enough, and thus the governing coffee elite began to look for ways to build a railroad.[11] In 1871, President Tomás Guardia signed an agreement with U.S. entrepreneur Henry Meiggs to build a railroad from the Central Valley to recently built Port Limón on the Caribbean coast.[12] Construction work proceeded rapidly at first: in 1873, there were already railway lines in use between Alajuela and Cartago in the Central Valley and between Limón and Matina on the Caribbean coast. However, the unification of these two pieces of railway was problematic.[13] After many complications, train service finally began between Port Limón and the Central Highland capital city, San José, in December 1890.[14] Before 1890 coffee was overwhelmingly the major export product of Costa Rica,

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[9] Ibid., 92.

[10] Between 1844 and 1846 an oxcart road was built from San José to Puntarenas. Five hundred oxcarts traveled back and forth on the road, five or six days in each direction. Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia contemporánea de Costa Rica*, 1ª reimpresión (México: FCE, 1999), 51. See also, Ibid., 44, 61; and Hall, *El café y el desarrollo*, 15. In 1866, a U.S. engineer had published a pamphlet trying to get U.S. investors interested in railroad building in Costa Rica, arguing that, in addition to political stability, Costa Rica offered the best climatic and topographic situation for a railroad uniting Atlantic and Pacific ports. See F. Kurtze, *La ruta ferroviaria interoceánica a través de la República de Costa Rica, 1866*, trans. Ricardo Jiménez (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta, Librería y Encuadernación "Alsina," 1918).

[11] The first two railroad building contracts were signed in 1866 and 1869, but neither was carried out. Jeffrey Casey Gaspar, "La mano de obra en la construcción del ferrocarril al atlántico, 1871-1874" (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica, 1974), 4.

[12] Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia*, 61.

[13] The problems had to do with errors in the rail plans and underestimation of the costs and scarcity of labor. Ibid., 63; Casey, "La mano de obra," 5-6.

and the railroad to the Caribbean coast greatly shortened transportation time to European markets. But there was an important by-product of railroad construction that would soon diminish coffee's share of the country's total exports: bananas.[15] The railroad completion contract signed between Minor Keith and the Costa Rican government in 1884 included a concession to the young businessman of 333,000 hectares of land along the track.[16] Here Keith experimented with the cultivation of bananas for export to U.S. markets. Bananas proved so profitable that they would ultimately transform the Caribbean lowlands, as the region became a "virtual principality of the banana empire" of Keith's United Fruit Company.[17] In this "principality," in addition to building more railroad branches, the Company began to execute development projects needed for banana production and export, projects that turned Port Limon into a city with relatively good public services including electricity, drinking water and a sewer system, dock facilities, and paved streets and roads.

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[14] The nephew of Henry Meiggs, Minor Keith had taken over the railroad building project, managing to finish it with ultimately huge profits. Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia*, 63. For more on railroad projects (and banana contracts) and their consequences for Costa Rican society see Carmen Murillo Chaverri, *Identidades de hierro y humo: la construcción del ferrocarril al Atlántico 1870-1890* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir, 1995); Casey, "La mano de obra"; "El ferrocarril al Atlántico en Costa Rica, 1871-1874," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 2 (1976): 291-344; and *Limón: 1880-1940. Un estudio de la industria bananera en Costa Rica* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1979).

[15] In the second half of the nineteenth century, Brazil also became a mass producer of coffee, providing between one-half and three-fourths of coffee in the world market. Jorge León Sáenz, *Evolución del comercio exterior y del transporte maritime de Costa Rica, 1821-1900* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1997), 90. The expansion of coffee production led to lower prices, and, finally, to an overproduction crisis in 1897. Prices received by Costa Rican coffee in 1901 were 50% less than those in 1894. See Carolyn Hall, *El café y el desarrollo*, 42.

[16] The treaty was signed in 1883 and approved by the Costa Rican Congress in April 1884; works started in August 1886. Joaquín Fernández Montúfar, *Historia ferrovial de Costa Rica. Galería del progreso nacional* (San José, Costa Rica: 1934), 23.

[17] Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia*, 69. For a classic study of the "banana empire" see Charles David Kepner and Jay Henry Soothill, *El imperio del banano: las companías bananeras contra la soberanía de las naciones del Caribe* (México: Ediciones del Caribe, 1949).

The expansion of the agro-export economy, centered on coffee and bananas, transformed not only the Caribbean coast but also Central Highland towns, as increased state revenues made it possible to improve infrastructure conditions and urban services in the country's center. In particular the capital, San José, experienced major growth in the last years of the nineteenth century, increasing in size from 153 to 259 blocks between 1889 and 1904.[18] Prosperity and growth were accompanied by new technology and services, such as the telegraph (1869) and telephone (1886); an iron pipeline for drinking water was inaugurated in 1868, and sewage lines were installed in the first years of the twentieth century. Electric light reached the capital's streets in 1884 and private homes in the 1890s. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, public and private investment financed the erection of a wide variety of new buildings and spaces open to the public: hotels, pharmacies, clubs, stores, restaurants, banks, libraries, theaters, schools, hospices, hospitals, a museum, a penitentiary, a new municipal market, and an insane asylum, among others. A trolley began running before the end of the nineteenth century, and new streets, promenades, boulevards, parks and other green areas, monuments, and railway stations were built.[19]

The following pictures of road building and agricultural modernization in the Central Valley were taken in the early twentieth century. In the first picture (Fig. 2.1), a gang of prisoners is working on road building in the Central Valley, and the second (Fig.

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[18] Florencia Quesada, "Urbanism, Architecture, and Cultural Transformations in San José, Costa Rica, 1850-1930," in *Planning Latin American Capital Cities 1850-1950,* edited by Arturo Almandoz (London: Routledge, 2002), 245.

[19] Ibid., 246-266; *En el barrio Amón: arquitectura, familia y sociabilidad del primer residencial de la elite urbana de San José, 1900-1935* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica – Comisión Nacional de Conmemoraciones Históricas, 2001), 45-83. See also Steven Palmer, "Prolegómenos a toda historia futura de San José, Costa Rica," *Mesoamérica* 31 (June 1996): 203-206.

2.2) shows that, although agricultural techniques did not modernize enormously, gasoline tractors were present in the Central Highlands in 1907.

Fig. 2.1. Gang of prisoners building road from Alajuela to Heredia. Source: Costa Rica. Oficina Nacional de Estadística. *Anuario de 1907. Anexo á la Memoria de Fomento de 1907-1908.* San José, Costa Rica: 1908.

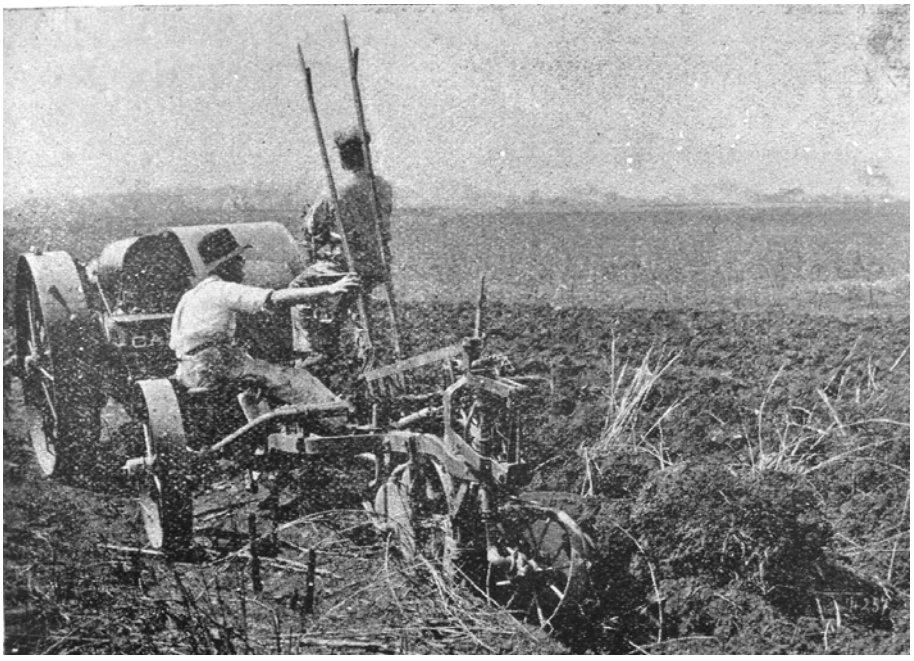

Fig. 2.2. A tractor used in a Central Valley farm of Santiago Zamora (Ojo de Agua, Alajuela). Source: Oficina Nacional de Estadística. *Anuario de 1907. Anexo á la Memoria de Fomento de 1907-1908* (San José, Costa Rica: 1908).

The Province of Guanacaste in the Era of "Progress"

Thus, in the late nineteenth century Costa Rica had reached world markets by selling coffee basically produced in the Central Valley and bananas produced on the Caribbean coast. Guanacaste remained isolated from these links with the world markets and their positive effects. Although timber was exported from Guanacaste to Europe, North America, and Peru, contributing to local capital accumulation, its importance for the national economy was in no way comparable to that of coffee and banana exports.[20] For example, in 1882, wood exports were declared tax-free for six years, but apparently the exemption was still in force in 1911, when the loggers were arguing against the reestablishment of an export tax on wood.[21] Wood exports were an important source of capital for Guanacastecan cattle ranchers, but the state did not receive important revenues from wood exports, nor did wood exports occasion transportation improvements in Guanacaste as coffee and banana exports did in the Central Valley and the Caribbean lowlands. Between 1886 and 1890, coffee comprised 84.5% of Costa Rica's total exports by value, bananas 8.4%. Guanacastecan products such as wood represented only 0.8% of total exports. Other Guanacastecan products, including gold and silver, represented even less than that. (Table 2.1) Government statistics show that Guanacaste's participation in the export economy was minimal at a time when the agro-export economies in the

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[20] The wood exporters usually were also cattle ranchers. Lowell Gudmundson, *Hacendados, políticos y precaristas: la ganadería y el latifundismo guanacasteco 1800-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1983), 83-84. "The list of hacendados who accumulated small fortunes in the wood trade in the period 1880-1930 reads like a *Who's Who* of the Guanacastecan elite." Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica Since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992), 56. See also Wilder Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera en Guanacaste: aspectos económicos y sociales 1850-1900* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 1985), 46-49.

[21] See Edelman, *The Logic of Latifundio*, 54-55, 57.

Central Highlands and the Caribbean lowlands were consolidated (coffee) or flourishing (bananas).

Exports of Costa Rica 1883-1890 (*In gold pesos*)	
Coffee	25,619,598
Banana	2,556,577
Cocoa	30,620
Carey	21,707
Rubber	307,290
Mother-of-pearl	34,735
Leather and Hides	504,391
Wood	247,537
Coins	659,632
Gold and Silver	65,055
Varios	268,821
TOTAL	30,315,963

Table 2.1 Source: Costa Rica, Oficina Nacional de Estadística. *Resúmenes Estadísticos, años 1883 á 1910: comercio, agricultura, industria* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1912), 6.

The Secretariat of Public Works and Office of Statistics issued a print report on infrastructure building and technological modernization in 1907 that made it all too clear that Guanacaste remained relatively isolated from the development and infrastructural modernization that was taking place in the country's center and on the axis between the capital city and the two oceanic ports, Limón and Puntarenas.[22] Although it may be an overstatement to claim that "the Central Valley formed the axis from East to West on which all the commercial activities of Costa Rica were concentrated until the decade of 1930,"[23] the truth is that most commercial activities and communication infrastructure development (except the telegraph network) did take place in the Central region and on

[22] Costa Rica, Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Anuario de 1907. Anexo á la Memoria de Fomento de 1907-1908*.

[23] Carolyn Hall, *El café y el desarrollo,* 69.

the Puntarenas—San José—Limón axis. Guanacaste in the northwest, San Carlos in the north, and the valleys of El General and Coto Brus in the south would not see important road projects until the mid-twentieth century.[24]

Yet the fact that Guanacaste was not directly tied to the export economy in no way implies that it was isolated from the national economy as a whole. On the contrary: as former subsistence cultivation lands in the Central Valley were turned to coffee production, Guanacaste began increasingly to supply the Central Valley population with foodstuffs—most importantly beef—and draught animals.[25] The rise in the cattle prices between 1840 and 1860 strengthened trade with Central Valley towns, whose elites became increasingly interested in the resources of Guanacaste.[26] By 1883, 33.4% of the nation's livestock—68,864 head—grazed in the plains of Guanacaste. At that moment the province had 14,902 inhabitants and almost four cows and one horse per inhabitant (Table 2.2).[27] The canton of Liberia had almost half (48.3%) of the province's total livestock population, while Nicoya had 13%, Santa Cruz 14.6%, Bagaces 17.6% and Cañas 6.5%.[28] The Bagaces Valley, in other words, continued being the most important cattle-ranching area in the province. However, Guanacastecan haciendas were not able to supply all the meat the Central Valley demanded. The solution was to import cattle from

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[24] Ibid., 69.

[25] Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia*, 70. The Central Valley was the most populated part of Costa Rica, and its lands and microclimate were the most suited for coffee cultivation in the entire country—even though the first cultivators were not aware of that fact. See Carolyn Hall, *El café y el desarrollo*, 35.

[26] Acuña and Molina, *Historia económica y social*, 95. According to Acuña and Molina, "capitalism was only debuting in Guanacaste, when it already had been consolidated in the Central Valley." Ibid., 96.

[27] Costa Rica, Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, *Censo de la República de Costa Rica*, 1883 (San José, Costa Rica: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1975), 45, 93.

[28] Ibid., 96-97.

Nicaragua. As early as 1849, a law had established free imports of livestock from that country.[29] In 1885, the government subsidized the importation of "improved races" by assuming the cost of transportation: Argentina was continuously mentioned as an exemplary cattle industry.[30] Livestock imports (including beasts of burden and draft as well as beef cattle) across the Nicaraguan border fluctuated from 8,471 to 23,015 head per year between 1906 and 1910, although the general tendency was upwards.[31] In 1920, 15,581 head of livestock were imported over the Nicaraguan border.[32]

PROVINCE	Cattle	Horses	Sheep	TOTALS
San José	25824	7477	1021	34322
Alajuela	35096	8112	7	43215
Cartago	29040	5272	120	34432
Heredia	15026	2044	7	17077
Guanacaste	56770	12013	81	68864
Puntarenas	6867	876	-	7743
Limón	640	60	-	700
Total	169263	35854	1236	206353

Table 2.2. Livestock by provinces in 1883. Source: Costa Rica. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. *Censo de la República de Costa Rica,* 1883 (San José, Costa Rica: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1975), 92.

From 1883 on, the livestock population of Guanacaste increased.[33] In 1891, there was an average of 786.75 cows and 142.99 horses for every 100 inhabitants in Guanacaste, while the equivalent figures for the other provinces were as follows: San

[29] Guanacastecan cattle elite opposed the law. Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera,* 168-169. Foreign travelers such as Moritz Wagner, who visited Guanacaste in the mid-nineteenth-century, also observed the cattle imports from Nicaragua. See Moritz Wagner and Carl Scherzer, *La República de Costa Rica en Centroamérica* Biblioteca Yorusti (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Lehman, 1944), 203. See also, Araya Pochet, *Historia económica*, 14.

[30] Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio,* 89.

[31] República de Costa Rica, Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Resúmenes estadísticos, años 1883-1910: comercio, agricultura, industria* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1912), 60.

[32] República de Costa Rica, Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario Estadístico. Año 1920* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1922), 7. See also Lowell Gudmundson, *Hacendados, políticos y precaristas*, 107.

[33] Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio,* 162.

José, 77.89 and 24.83; Alajuela, 117.45 and 31.53; Cartago, 141.80 and 28.84; Heredia, 116.86 and 21.06; Puntarenas 115.42 and 20.55; and Limón 210.35 and 17.66. The ratio of livestock to people was considerably higher in Guanacaste than the average in the rest of the country, which was only 129.96 cows and 24.07 horses per 100 inhabitants. In 1891, 39% of the cows and 31.5% of the horses in Costa Rica were grazing the Guanacastecan *pampa*, while 89% of sheep and 93.3% of pigs were in the Central Highland provinces of Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia, and San José.[34] Guanacaste produced 30.8% of country's livestock in 1906, and the province's share of national livestock production increased to 36% the following year.[35] In the following table it is possible to observe the share of the province of Guanacaste in national livestock production from 1887 to 1939 (Table 2.3). Guanacaste produced approximately between 30 and 44% of the country's cattle in this period.

Year	Costa Rica	Guanacaste	%
1887	233217	85075	36.5
1888	262596	94196	35.9
1889	292805	108801	37.2
1890	316925	122026	38.5
1891	345668	134567	38.9
1904	271691	83258	30.6
1905	308160	118686	38.5
1914	336061	134605	40.1
1924	403706	176531	43.7
1929	398737	141224	35.4
1933	365589	161159	44.1
1939	374804	158193	42.2

Table 2.3 Livestock in Costa Rica and Guanacaste according to livestock censuses of 1887-1939. Source: Gudmundson, *Hacendados, politicos y precaristas*, 168.

[34] Costa Rica, *Resúmenes estadísticos 1883-1910*, 106.

[35] Based on: Costa Rica, Oficina Nacional de Estadística, *Anuario de 1907. Anexo a la Memoria de Fomento de 1907-1908: demografía, comercio, agricultura, industria* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1908), 210-211.

In addition to cattle, Guanacaste also supplied the country's economy with other products such as tobacco, minerals, sugar, and grains. Tobacco had been crucial crop in Costa Rica and Guanacaste since colonial times, and it was the single most important source of revenue for the immediately postcolonial Costa Rican state.[36] Although Costa Rican tobacco was not of a high quality, still in 1883 there were 1,679,388 plants in the country. San José produced 41.2% of Costa Rica's total tobacco crop in that year, Alajuela 9.4%, Cartago almost 23%, and Guanacaste 17.67%. According to government statistics, the average size of Guanacastecan tobacco farms was by far the largest in the country: the average number of tobacco plants per farmer was 4,765 in San José, 5,791 in Alajuela, 6,018 in Cartago, and 8,039 in Guanacaste. Neither San José's relatively small properties nor Guanacaste's comparatively extensive ones seem to have been particularly productive, although differences in soil fertility and climactic factors surely also affected output. Productivity was between 10 and 10.69 *quintales* per *manzana* in Alajuela, Cartago, Heredia and Puntarenas; 6.55 *quintales* per *manzana* in San José; and only 5.5 *quintales* per *manzana* in Guanacaste. Under the circumstances, it would seem that Guanacaste had little future as an important tobacco producer.[37]

Mining had been considered an important economic option for Costa Rica after independence, and the government tried to promote it, most importantly in the Montes del Aguacate, located between the Central Highlands and Puntarenas.[38] Gold was

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[36] "Cuadro que manifiesta el estado de las Rentas Nacionales al terminar el año de 1824," in Francisco María Iglesias, *Documentos relativos a la independencia*, vol. 3 (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1902), 338-339. See also Yamileth González, "Continuidad colonial: cultivo del tabaco (1821-1878)," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* 27-28(1984): 75-92.

[37] Costa Rica, *Resúmenes estadísticos, años 1883 á 1910*, 105. Overall productivity was highest in Limón (25 *quintales* per *manzana*), but only 3.4% of the country's total production was located there.

discovered in Abangares in 1884, and by the 1920s, the mining industry was a lucrative business for a few foreign companies: the U.S.-owned Abangares Gold Fields of Costa Rica produced more than one half (1,359.7 kg) of total gold exports (2,531 kg) in 1925.[39] This company, whose principal shareholder was the United Fruit Company founder Minor Keith, acquired approximately 40,000 hectares of land in Abangares and Tilarán, turning the zone into the principal mining area of Costa Rica.[40] Recent scholarship has revealed the complex social dynamics, including struggles over land and racial conflicts, in the mining enclaves, especially in Abangares.[41]

Grain shortage in the Central Highlands in 1864 and 1865 had spurred grain imports from Guanacaste, originating regular launch transportation between Puntarenas and the river ports of Guanacaste.[42] Guanacaste has been called the granary of Costa Rica, although as late as 1884 Guanacaste produced only around 9.75% of the country's rice crop. Alajuela was the real granary of Costa Rica in the late nineteenth century, producing more than 60% of the country's rice in 1884. In the same year Guanacaste

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[38] Unlike tobacco production, mining had always been an activity of private enterprises. Araya Pochet, *Historia económica*, 15-17.

[39] *Memoria de Fomento 1925*, vii.

[40] Araya Pochet, *Historia económica*, 61.

[41] Gudmundson, *Hacendados, políticos y precaristas*, 185-188. See also Lowell Gudmundson, "Documentos para la historia del distrito minero del Guanacaste: ¿Enclave minero?," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 6 (Jan.-July 1976); Guillermo García Murillo, *Las minas de abangares: historia de una doble explotación* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1984); Aviva Chomsky, "Laborers and Smallholders in Costa Rica's Mining Communities, 1900-1940, in *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean*, ed. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 169-195; and Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 53, 58, 84, 132-133.

[42] Steam launch service increased especially in the 1890s, with the new industries of logging and mining in Guanacaste. Ibid., 85. "El ferrocarril al Pacífico ha tenido una extraordinaria influencia en el desenvolvimiento de la producción nacional, preferentemente de artículos que escasearon desde la época de Soto y Rodríguez, como arroz, frijoles, etc. Por otro lado, el Guanacaste, granero de primera magnitud, se acercó al corazón de la Patria." Carlos Monge Alfaro, *Historia de Costa Rica*, 17.ed. (San José: Trejos, 1982), 250.

produced less than 1.8% of the beans grown in the country (181 out of 10,101 *fanegas*), while San José, Alajuela, and Cartago together produced more than 95% of the country's beans. Only 5.6% of corn produced in Costa Rica came from Guanacaste; 82.25% of corn was harvested in San José, Alajuela and Cartago. According to the 1884 statistics, the provinces of Guanacaste, Puntarenas and Limon grew neither potatoes nor wheat, two crops that need temperate climates.[43] Over the following decades, Guanacaste's role as a center of cereal cultivation grew. According to the 1929 agrarian census, in Guanacaste there were 1,523 hectares of land dedicated to rice, 769 to beans, and 8,424 to corn, while the rest of the country dedicated 4,015 hectares of land to rice, 8,977 to beans, and 25,138 to corn.[44] In other words, by 1929 fully a quarter of Costa Rica's land dedicated to the cultivation of rice (27.5%) and corn (25%) were in Guanacaste. According to Aristides Baltodano, the usually accepted yield of rice fields in Guanacaste was about 10 to 15 *sacos* per *manzana* (a manzana is equivalent to 0.7 hectare), although by 1937 the yield was increasing.[45]

Clearly the principal economic activities of Guanacaste linked the province to the national economy, yet they still did not lead to modernization of the economic infrastructure. In Western Guatemala, Arturo Taracena found that regional elites invested systematically in local infrastructure. This did not happen in Guanacaste. Wood

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[43] See "Estadística Agrícola: año de 1884," in Carlos Meléndez Chaverri, *Documentos fundamentales del siglo XIX* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1978), 47, 49, 53-57.

[44] Some districts did not send information for this census: three districts of the municipality of Tarrazú; one of Acosta; two from the municipality of Dota, and two districts of the municipality of Liberia. See República de Costa Rica, Dirección General de Estadística, *Anuario Estadístico: año 1929* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1930), 61-62.

[45] Aristides Baltodano Guillén, "Apuntes agropecuarios referents a Guanacaste" (Thesis, Escuela de Agricultura, Costa Rica, 1937), 18.

exports and livestock production fueled the growth of a wealthy cohort of landowners and ranchers, who wielded important political power both within the province and nationally, but were not notably interested in investing their capital in modernization or infrastructure improvement projects in the province. To judge by both their words and deeds, they considered the provision of communications infrastructure and the construction of public buildings to be the obligation of the national state.

The Power of the Cattle Elite

Wilder Sequeira has identified three phases in the development of cattle ranching in Guanacaste from the colonial period to the early twentieth century. The first corresponded to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when almost all the hacienda owners in the Partido de Nicoya were from Nicaragua, and did not live on their haciendas. During the second phase, from independence through 1880, families originated in the Central Highland coffee oligarchy moved into the Guanacastecan cattle industry. The third phase, approximately from 1880 to 1920, was characterized by the arrival of large-scale foreign capitalists, principally from France and the U.S., who bought landed properties in order to do business in cattle, sugar, and timber production.[46]

It was the cattle oligarchy who represented the province before the national state. According to Sequeira, the most important positions—governors and congressmen—were in the hands of the *hacendado* (hacienda owner) class. For example, of the thirty-one congressmen from Guanacaste between 1850 and 1900, nineteen (61%) were *hacendados*, while the rest were merchants or members of bureaucratic sectors who

[46] Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera*, 90. See also Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio,* 33-66.

climbed from the position of clerk to that of governor or congressman.[47] Even when the representatives of the province did not come directly from the *hacendado* group, in practice they defended the large landowners' interests. Certainly none of the congressmen happened to come from subaltern classes. The key political positions were in the hands of the *hacendado* class or their agents, and their legal and political representatives in the central government were frequently lawyers who became ministers, heads of the Supreme Court, or even presidents of the Republic.[48] The mid-nineteenth-century cattle elite controlled the electoral assemblies in Guanacaste to such an extent that in 1849 they were able to withdraw one Guanacastecan congressman from his post because he was not fulfilling his mission to promote cattle production in Guanacaste.[49]

Communications

One early-twentieth-century account of Costa Rica noted that "[a]ll the provinces of the Republic are linked by railroads, roads, telegraph and telephone lines, with the exception of Guanacaste, which is not yet reached by the iron path."[50] According to German traveler Polakowsky there were good roads only in the highlands, between the towns of Alajuela and Cartago.[51] Guanacaste was reached by water. "Exports" (as

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[47] Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera*, 167.

[48]Ibid., 99-101.

[49] Ibid., 161-162. According to Sequeira the *hacendados* occupied public positions within the province as well, but not in so great a proportion as was the case for higher political positions such as governors and congressmen, which were directly occupied by the *hacendados* or at least controlled by them. Between 1850 and 1900, 61% of Guanacastecan representatives in the National Congress were *hacendados*, and the 38% were merchants or bureaucrats with close ties to the *hacendados*. Ibid., 167.

[50] *Boceto de la República de Costa Rica 1910* (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1910), 6.

[51] Polakowsky in Miguel Angel Quesada Pacheco, *Entre silladas y rejoyas: viajeros por Costa Rica de 1850 a 1950* (Cartago, Costa Rica: Editorial Tecnológica de Costa Rica, 2001), 235.

Guanacastecans often called them at the time) from Guanacaste to the Central Valley did not produce the same infrastructural modernization as the coffee and banana economies in the Central Highlands and Caribbean lowlands. Guanacastecan cattle ranches had difficulties in meeting the demand for animals in the Central Valley not only because they could not supply sufficient livestock, but also because of the miserable state of communications. Transportation of passengers and products began on mule or horseback, continued by waterway to Puntarenas, and from there reached the Central Valley by the oxcart road or, after 1910, by railroad.[52] Even though after 1890 coffee was exported primarily via Port Limón on the Caribbean, the port of Puntarenas continued playing an important role; and after the inauguration of Panama Canal in 1914, Puntarenas could compete again with Limón as a coffee-exporting port.[53] Puntarenas received ships from abroad and was also central to the small-boat coastal trading network that stretched along the Pacific coast from the Gulf of Nicoya to Panama City. Moreover, Puntarenas received the boats full of commodities, grains, cattle, and people from the fluvial ports of Guanacaste via the Tempisque River through the Gulf of Nicoya.[54] In

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[52] See *Memoria de Fomento 1884*, ANCR Congreso 21125, 36. The complete railroad of 132 km from San José to Puntarenas was inaugurated in July 23, 1910. M.A. Castro Carazo, *Breve reseña del ferrocarril al Pacífico desde sus comienzos hasta nuestros días* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1933), 19. The *Blue Book of Costa Rica* in 1916 declared that it took six hours to travel by train from San José to Limón, and five hours from San José to Puntarenas. "The lines are solidly laid and accidents rarely occur; the cars are clean and comfortable, and both the passenger and freight service are given prompt and careful attention." *Libro Azul*, Latin American Publicity Bureau, Costa Rica, 1916 (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Alsina, 1916), 84.

[53] Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia*, 71. Coffee exports via Puntarenas incremented, although the exports from that port decreased from 41.49% of total national exports in 1913, to 33.85% in 1914, to less than 24% in of 1915 and 1916, probably because of the abrupt decrease in wood exports which usually took place in Puntarenas. See Herberth Ulloa Hidalgo, *El ferrocarril costarricense al Pacífico: construcción e incidencias, 1897-1932* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1997), 153.

[54] "Memoria de Fomento presentada al Congreso Constitucional 1896 por el señor Secertario de Estado en esa cartera Dr. Don Juan J. Ulloa G. (San José: Tipografía nacional, 1896), XIII," ANCR Congreso 21.398.

order to reach Guanacaste, passengers from the Central Highlands had first to travel by train to the port of Puntarenas and then continue by boat, disembarking after ten hours or more in river ports such as Bebedero, Ballena, Bolsón, or Jesús. (Fig. 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5) In the years of 1908-1909, a boat from Puntarenas made two trips a week to the river port of Bolsón, with a stop in Humo; one trip a week to Bebedero, with a stop in Manzanillo; and one trip every two weeks to Puerto Jesús. The frequency of the trips was increased in 1913 to two weekly trips to Bebedero and Ballena (with a stop in Humo); three trips a week to Manzanillo and Chomes; and one weekly trip to Puerto Jesús and San Pablo.[55] Internal communications in the province were intermittent, depending on the season of the year. Rains transformed most roads into rivers, halting—or at least making extremely difficult—the transportation of humans and goods.[56] As we shall see in the next chapter, Guanacaste's "isolation" from the rest of Costa Rica, and the miserable conditions of its roads, would play a prominent role in the complaints of central government "abandonment" that proliferated in the pages of the province's newspapers beginning at the start of the twentieth century.

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[55] Ulloa, *El ferrocarril costarricense al Pacífico*, 175. In 1933, there were two trips every week from Puntarenas to the fluvial ports of Guanacaste. *Memoria de Fomento y Agricultura correspondiente al año 1933, presentada al Congreso Constitucional por don León Cortés, Secretario de Estado en el Despacho de esas carteras* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1935), 45. In 1925, 20,837 passengers and 18,729 head of cattle were transported by the Empresa de Transportes Marítimos del Golfo de Nicoya between Guanacaste and Puntarenas. *Memoria de Fomento 1925*, xiii-xiv.

[56] "Todas las poblaciones de Costa Rica están unidas por caminos carreteros más o menos unidos bien construido; con excepción de la ciudad de Liberia, en la provincia de Guanacaste, con la cual las comunicaciones se efectúan generalmente por Puntarenas y el golfo de Nicoya, tanto por la comodidad de esta vía, como porque en la época de lluvias el trayecto entre Esparza y Bagaces llega á ser intransitable, por el peligro que ofrecen los ríos." Joaquín Bernardo Calvo, *República de Costa Rica. Apuntamientos geográficos, estadísticos e histórico* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Nacional, 1887), 132.

Fig. 2.3. Pacific Railroad in Puntarenas. Source: Manuel Gómez Miralles, *Costa Rica, América Central 1922: album de fotos*.

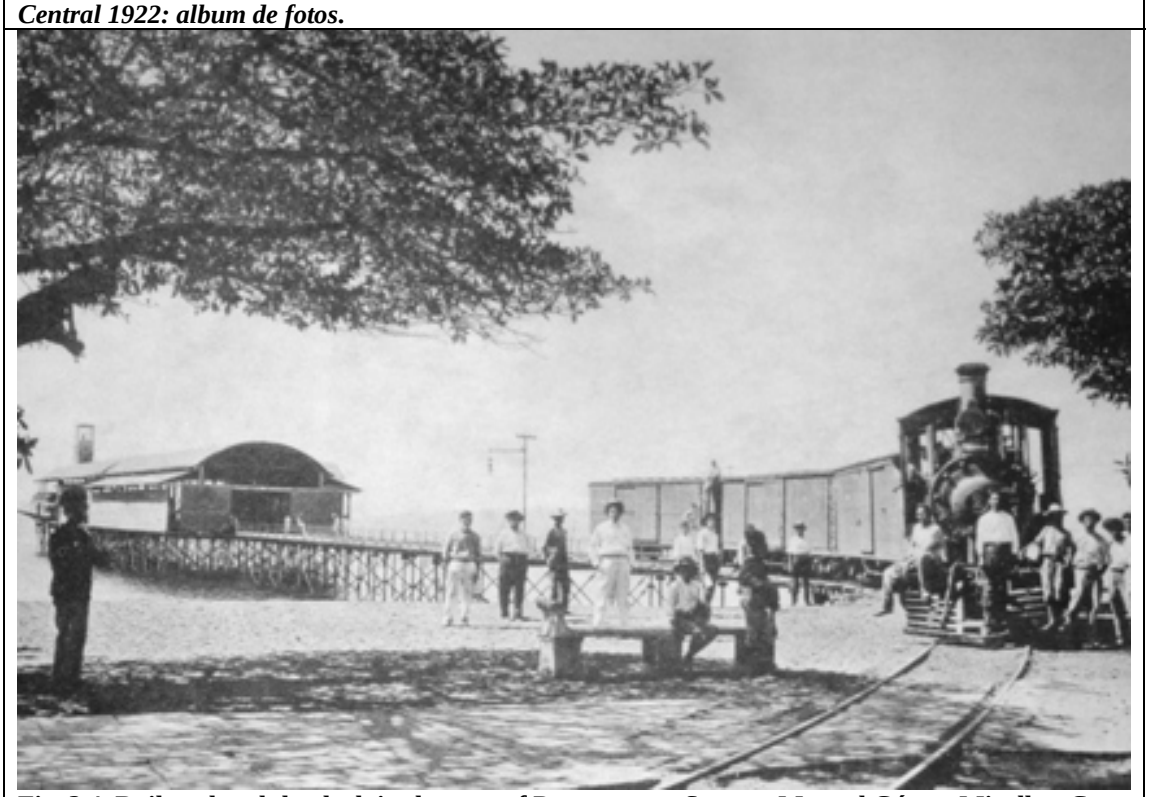

Fig. 2.4 Railroad and the dock in the port of Puntarenas. Source: Manuel Gómez Miralles, *Costa Rica, América Central 1922: album de fotos*.

The 1922 pictures in Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show the Pacific Railroad ending at the port of Puntarenas. Figure 2.5 shows one of the fluvial ports of Guanacaste that connected the province with Puntarenas. After a ten-hour trip boat trip, passengers sought lodging in that port in order to continue their trip to San José the next day in a more modern form of transportation, the railroad, reaching the capital about six hours later. Thus a journey from Guanacaste to the capital city in the second decade of the twentieth century could three or even more days, depending on the point of departure within the province: few of the passengers lived near to the province's river ports.

Figure 2.5 Fluvial port Jesús, Guanacaste. Source: Manuel Gómez Miralles, *Costa Rica, América Central 1922: album de fotos*.

There had been projects to build roads and railroads in Guanacaste in the last decades of the nineteenth century. General Tomás Guardia received a concession from

the state to build a mule road between San Ramón in Alajuela and Bagaces (or Cañas) in 1867.[57] Another concession was granted in 1874 for a period of nineteen years to M. Kay, an entrepreneur, who had offered to build a *camino de herradura* from Guanacaste to the frontier with Nicaragua in the direction of Lake Nicaragua.[58] In 1859, the government had tried to resolve the problem of lack of communications and roads by moving entire villages to fluvial ports, as with the inhabitants of Cañas and Bagaces, who were required by law to move to Bebedero. The villagers did not obey the law, manifesting that they were not interested in moving, because in Bagaces they had good farming lands and in Cañas "everything was good," in contrast to the unhealthy environment in Bebedero.[59] In 1896, the secretary of Public Works reported that a plan had been elaborated to build a 32-kilometer road between Liberia and Culebra Bay. However, the terrain—lowland swamps—presented a major challenge, and would make the project too expensive, so the secretary was considering railroad building instead. A

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[57] Decree no. 26 of July 22, 1867. *Colección de leyes y decretos 1867-1868*, vol. 17 (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta La Paz, 1874), 108-109. In the same year, Governor of Guanacaste Víctor Guardia reported that he was trying to do maintenance works on the national road from Liberia to Bagaces, but it was necessary to build four bridges in order to avoid the rivers that cut the road. Costa Rica, "Informes del Secretario de Estado, departamentos de Guerra, Marina, Gobernación, Fomento y Justicia, presentado al Congreso Nacional de Costa Rica en 1867 (a 1869)," ANCR Congreso 29978, 101. The governor reported that there was also a project to build a route from Liberia to the border with Nicaragua. Ibid., 59. See also ANCR Congreso 21009, 1896. It was Governor Guardia's brother Tomás who as Costa Rica's president-dictator from 1870 to 1882 consolidated the liberal state project, modernizing the country in accordance with the dictates of the agro-export economy, and practically excluding his native province, Guanacaste, from the project of transportation modernization. "He encouraged improvements in the transportation and communication systems. He helped to foster the modernizing of the cities by paving the streets; putting in street lighting, bringing in running water, building municipal buildings for city halls, jails, schools, and cuartels." Donna Lillian Cotton, "Costa Rica and the era of Tomás Guardia, 1870-1882" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1972), 39.

[58] Decree XXI, June 6, 1874. *Colección de las leyes, decretos y órdenes expedidos por los supremos poderes legislativo y ejecutivo de Costa-Rica, en el año de* 1874 (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta La Paz, 1875), 67.

[59] The governor of the province organized meetings to vote for or against the move to Bebedero. Only 5 out of 26 in Bagaces accepted the idea of moving to Bebedero, while in Cañas all 27 voted against it. See the report of the Governor of Moracia [Guanacaste] to the Government, March 22, 1859. ANCR, Congreso 6658, 41v-43v.

railroad would be an agent of progress in the province, he wrote, as it not only could be connected later to the Pacific Railroad, which led to the Central Highlands via Puntarenas, but could also become the point of departure for a new railroad from Liberia to San Carlos that would facilitate communication between northwestern Pacific region and the Atlantic ocean via the San Carlos River.[60] These projects of progress, however, never materialized, and as road and railroad building proceeded apace in the Central Highlands and along the Limón-Puntarenas axis, Guanacaste's relative isolation increased. Peripheral status, we can see, was inherently comparative. Unchanging transportation conditions in Guanacaste came to seem dramatically "backward" because other parts of the country saw significant progress in their communications systems.[61] As a result, at the turn of the century Guanacastecan elites and leaders began to experience their province as abandoned by the central government; at the same time, others trusted that Guanacaste, too, would soon enjoy prosperity once roads and railroads were built across its vast territory in near future.

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[60] "Memoria de Fomento presentada al Congreso Constitucional 1896 por el señor Secretario de Estado en esa cartera Dr. Don Juan J. Ulloa G." (San José, Tipografía nacional, 1896), vi-vii, ANCR, Congreso 21.398. In 1892, the U.S. government had financed a study of the possibility of building a *Pan-American Railroad*. The Director General of Public Works had worked with U.S. government engineers for six months studying the issue and said, in 1931, that a railroad from Barranca to Liberia would cost on 1.5 million dollars. He said the 1892 study was still valid in 1931, because the earth had not changed. The railroad from Barranca to Liberia would need seventeen bridges. The railroad would be useful for the whole country because Guanacaste was the granary of Costa Rica, and the province of Guanacaste was unable to develop its production because of the lack of communications. Matamoros did not agree that the project would be too costly. He added that those studies done in 1892 had also been useful for planning the construction of the Pan-American Highway. "El Ing. Don Luis Matamoros calcula que con un millón y medio de dólares se puede construir el ferrocarril al Guanacaste." *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 4, 1931, 1, 7.

[61] For example, in the annual report of the Minister of Public Works in 1896, only 138.50 of the total 424,169.47 *pesos* spent on roads went to Guanacaste. Costa Rica, "Memoria de Fomento 1896," ANCR Congreso 21009, viii.

As consequence of advances in communications, in the last years of the nineteenth century public administration in Costa Rica was expected to reach a certain level of efficiency and speed. Guanacaste, however, failed to fulfill the new central government standards, not only due to its isolation from the Central Valley but because the province's towns and villages were isolated from each other. Such was the case of the school district of Las Juntas, which had to send its 1900 school reports to Cañas. Primary School Inspector Faerron sent a note to the national director of school statistics explaining that the late arrival of the Las Juntas reports reflected no irresponsibility on behalf of the director of the Las Juntas school but rather the extreme difficulty of communications between the two places. There was no regular mail—anyone who happened to travel from Las Juntas to Cañas might carry the documents—and between Cañas and Liberia there was regular mail only once a week. "It would be easier to use the telegraph," Faerron concluded.[62] Earlier that year a column in a capital city newspaper had reported that the mail service to Guanacaste could not be worse: it took twelve days for a letter to travel from the large town of Filadelfia to the country's capital in San José.[63]

Telegraph was without doubt the best-disseminated public service and new communications technology in the province. The telegraph was first introduced to Costa Rica in 1869, and by 1884 there were about 236 miles of telegraph line in the country, divided in three sections: 95 miles from Cartago to Puntarenas, 101 miles from Esparza

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[62] ANCR, Educación 10793, July 15, 1900.

[63] *La Prensa Libre*, February 21, 1900, 2.

to Liberia, and 40 miles from Liberia to the Nicaraguan border.[64] The inhabitants of Guanacastecan towns and villages petitioned the central government to install telegraph and post offices, like in the case of the Palmira district of the municipality of Carrillo, where residents asked for a telegraph in 1903. The Director General of Telegraph services accepted the petition on the basis that the district encompassed 700 inhabitants, two settlements (Paso del Tempisque and San Rafael), five business installations, a liquor administration office, and other activities related to commerce.[65] The criteria, therefore, was to have a certain threshold of commercial activities and enterprises that would regularly use the service. Another circumstance that facilitated the establishment of the telegraph in Palmira was that the inhabitants offered to donate a building for the telegraph office.[66] Expansion continued apace, and by 1924 an extensive telegraph network crossed Guanacaste, including 35 telegraph offices and 1027 kilometers of telegraph line for public use (Fig. 2.6).[67]

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[64] Between April 1, 1883 and February 29, 1884, Liberians sent 1,205 of the country's 27,272 telegrams. *Memoria de Fomento 1884*, ANCR Congreso 21125. In 1896, the use of telephone lines and the 271 telephones in country was limited to the Central Highlands. Ibid.; *Memoria de Fomento 1896*, ANCR, Congreso 21009, xxiv.

[65] ANCR, Policía 293, March 24, 27, and 28, 1903.

[66] *Colección de Leyes y Decretos*, 1er semestre 1903 (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Nacional, 1903), 242-243. By speeding Guanacastecans' communications, the telegraph was an important advance for the local and provincial economy and administration, but it also was part of the state project of extending control over the national territory and its inhabitants. For an interesting analysis of communications as means of state control, see José Daniel Gil Zúñiga, "Controlaron el espacio, hombres, mujeres y almas: Costa Rica (1880-1941)," *Abuso sexual y prostitución infantil y juvenil en Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX*, edited by Eugenia Rodríguez Sáenz (San José, Costa Rica: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 2005), 21-29.

[67] Only Alajuela had more telegraph offices (37) than Guanacaste in 1924. The rest of the provinces had the following numbers: San José 28; Cartago 19; Heredia 13; Puntarenas 10; and Limón 8. According to Víctor Cabrera, the Cañas telegraph office was the most important of Guanacaste. There were also 38 post offices in Guanacaste. Víctor Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo. Centenario de la incorporación del Partido de Nicoya a Costa Rica, 1824-1924* (San José, Costa Rica: Publicación de la Secretaría de Gobernación, Imprenta María v. de Lines, 1924), 173-175.

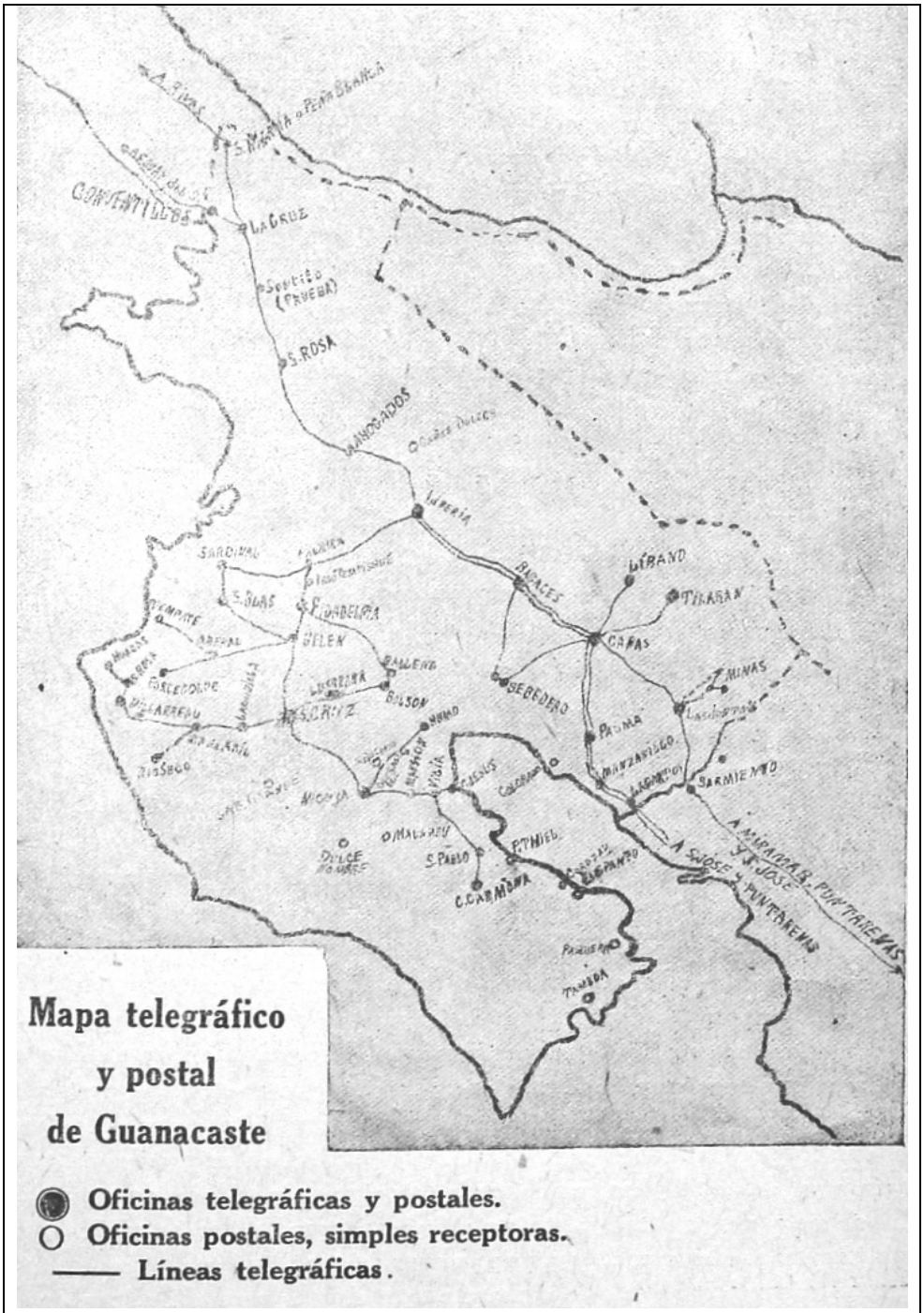

Fig. 2.6 The telegraphic net in Guanacaste by 1924. Source: Víctor Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 345.

The telegraph made state administration more fluid and sped communications between the central government and the local authorities. However, the telegraph lines

had an enemy that was sometimes very difficult to fight against: nature. In 1900, a local correspondent of *La Prensa Libre* reported that the telegraph line between Filadelfia and Liberia was in wretched condition, and almost every day the wind threw the cable down.[68] The rainy season also made trouble: floods could leave a whole office isolated, as happened in October 1924, when the telegrapher of Santa Bárbara disconnected his equipment and took his family to find shelter on a hill. At the same time, his colleague in the river port of Ballena had to use the telegraph to ask somebody to come and rescue him by boat, before his office disappeared in the flood.[69]

The telegraph lines' utility went far beyond the function for which they had been installed: the cables were also used by travelers to guide them on the overland journey to Liberia. In 1919, Eugene Cunningham traveled from Esparza to the Nicaraguan border, passing by Las Juntas, Bebedero, Cañas, Liberia, and La Cruz. In his diary Cunningham explained he and his friend traveled by horse in a terrain where there were no actual roads but mere pieces of road and track. They had to follow the telegraph line in order to stay on course and not get lost.

> We had been instructed to follow the telegraph-wire. Well and good! We tried to follow it; wanted nothing more than the chance. But the wire and the trail were like two short-tempered companions; for a time they marched along together amicably enough, then some point of disagreement (apparently) would arise and *lina* [sic] swung one way and *camino* another.[70]

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[68] *La Prensa Libre*, March 7, 1900, 2.

[69] *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 15, 1924, 1; and October 16, 1924, 3. In 1933, twenty-five days of rain and storms damaged all the telegraph lines in Guanacaste. *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 6, 1933, 1, 6.

[70] Eugene Cunningham, *Gypsying through Central America*, with photographs by Norman Hartman (New York: E.P.Dutton and Company, 1922), 82.

Dreams of Progress and Perceptions of Backwardness: The *Libro Azúl*, the Presidential Visit, and the Construction of Images of Guanacaste

Some turn-of-the-century visitors, like Cunningham, used narratives of travel through Guanacaste to underline their own modern savvy and sophistication by recounting the difficulties of travel in the province with picaresque humor. Other visitors eschewed irony for enthusiasm, praising the marvelous resources that would surely bring prosperity to the province in near future. Swiss geographer Henry Pittier, who accompanied the Bishop of Costa Rica Bernardo Thiel in his voyages to the country's rural peripheries in 1896, stated in his diary, "Nicoya and all the villages of Guanacaste are called to enjoy a brilliant future once the governments begin to value them for their worth and the communications are improved and cared for as they deserve, in order to establish intimate and frequent relationships with the provinces of the 'interior.'"[71] Pittier also found Liberians to be the most joyful and most open people of Guanacaste, due, he wrote, to their Nicaraguan origin.[72] All foreign travelers were amazed at the large haciendas, sometimes comparing them to German principalities.[73]

At the turn of the century, Guanacaste began to be observed through photographic lenses as well. The new technology of the photograph appeared in Latin America at the same time as elites began to talk about modernity and progress. Photographs built images of the advance of progress in Latin American cities: according to Robert Levine, "[c]onvention required that Latin American photographers ignore backwardness and

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[71] Pittier in Carlos Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste* (San José, Costa Rica: Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deportes, 1974), 299.

[72] Ibid., 308.

[73] For example, Stephens in ibid., 130-134; also cited by Sequeira, *La hacienda ganadera,* 71.

poverty or that they sanitize it through contrived composition."[74] Although already by the 1890s photographers had begun to show the dark sides of the modernization in the United States and Europe, in early-twentieth-century Latin America they were still engaged in telling a triumphalist tale of Liberal progress.[75] Certainly this was the case for the few Costa Rican photographers of the era, who dedicated themselves to portraying their country, mainly the capital city, but also the peripheries.[76]

Like many other countries in the early twentieth century, Costa Rica published its "success story of progress" in form of a *Libro Azúl* (Blue Book) in 1916. According to Robert Levine, "'[v]irtually every nation, state, municipality, public utility, and thousands of banks, schools, social clubs, and commercial associations subsidized these testimonies to progress," yearbooks—subsidized by governments as well as private firms—that were "shamelessly boosterish, using stylized photographs of officials… and shots of military officers, prize-winning animals, public works, buildings, parks, harvest-laden fields, and produce-laden trains and docks."[77] Just like family albums, the function of Blue Books as national albums was to tell a story by means of photos and text.[78] The story told by each national album was necessarily a tale of success, an optimistic vision of the country's present and future. The purpose of the *Libro Azúl de Costa Rica 1916*

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[74] Robert M. Levine, *Images of History: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Latin American Photographs as Documents* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1989), 37-38.

[75] Ibid., 61.

[76] Among the most important professional photographers in Costa Rica was Manuel Gómez Miralles, who took tens of thousands of pictures in different parts of the country between the years of 1911 and 1963, including the photo chronicle of the president Alfredo González Flores's official visit to Guanacaste in 1916.

[77] Levine, *Images of History*, 62.

[78] Daniel James and Mirta Zaida Lobato, "Family Photos, Oral Narratives, and Identity Formation: The Ukranians of Berisso," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 84, no. 1(2004): 21.

was to show the country—not only the capital city but also some provinces—as attractive place for private business. The section on the province of Guanacaste in the *Libro Azúl* in 1916 was mainly dedicated to the city and the municipal council of Liberia, painting an amazingly modernized picture of the provincial capital: urban infrastructure with straight streets and public buildings.[79] According to the *Libro Azúl*, Guanacaste was connected by "first class service" from the Port of Puntarenas to the different river ports of Guanacaste, and the service was safe and rapid, "providing quick and cheap transportation for cattle from Guanacaste." The company worked so well that it had never received a complaint or had a delay in service.[80] Not only had the city of Liberia reached modernity, according to *Libro Azúl*, but also the provincial ports were about to be touched by the hand of progress, as Coco Bay would have very soon its modern port, connected to a railroad the construction of which the Congress already had ordered.[81] Among other marks of progress was the postal service, which also was working properly, as the steamboats carried the mail nine times a month between Puntarenas and Ballena, Bolsón, Bebedero and other river ports of Guanacaste. Although the *Libro Azúl* could not show too many roads, it argued that it was easy to build roads and highways, because Costa Rica was a country of small holders, and all landowners left a fringe of land between their properties. There was no *latifundio* in Costa Rica, according to the *Libro Azúl*.[82] The city of Liberia was presented as home of the most advanced people in the province, displaying photographs of the city council of the "joyful and progressive city of

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[79] Levine, *Images of History*, 62.

[80] *Libro Azul*, 473.

[81] Ibid., 48.

[82] Ibid., 79.

Liberia."[83] In one photo appear the outgoing members of city council (Fig. 2.7) and in another, the incoming ones (Fig. 2.8).

Fig. 2.7 Source: ***Libro Azul de Costa Rica 1916*****.**

[83] Ibid., 391.

Fig. 2.8 Source: ***Libro Azul de Costa Rica 1916*****.**

Other images included straight streets, public buildings, churches, public employees, a couple of bridges—one of them, actually, drawn by hand—, and social activities of the white-dressed Liberian elite. The presence of the modern state in the province—the Board of Education, Group of Teachers, Public School—seemed unquestionable, but the point that probably commands our attention most is the picture of an automobile in Liberia (Fig. 2.9). Given road conditions in the province, it is difficult to explain how it had got there.[84]

[84] For example, when the president made a trip to Guanacaste thirteen years later, the roads had to be repaired so that the official vehicle could pass through. "Frontera Norte," *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 26, 1929, 2.

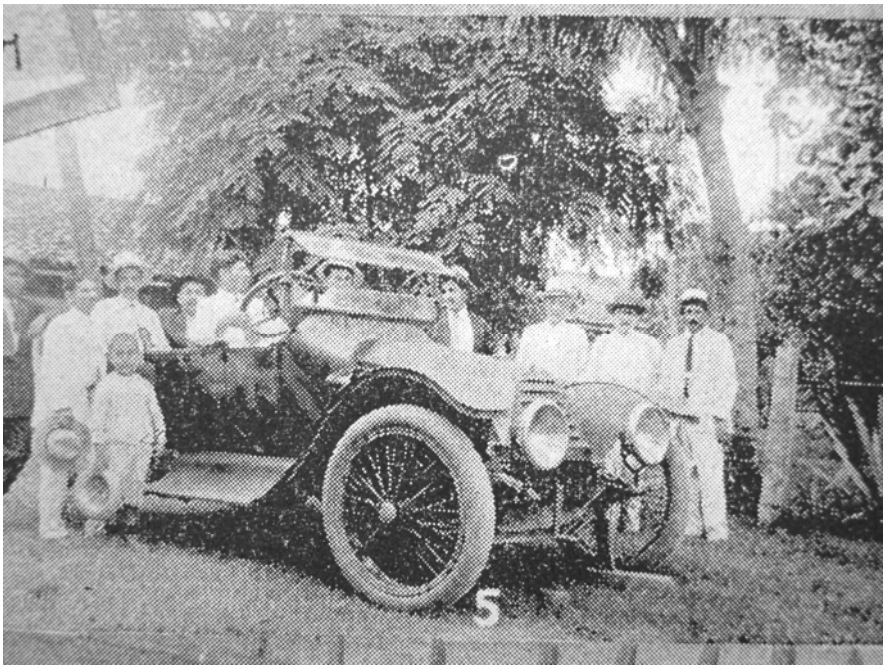

Fig. 2.9. Automobile in Liberia, 1916. Source: *Libro Azúl de Costa Rica*, 1916.

As with any historical document, a photograph must be interrogated regarding its author's intentions and biases and its intended audience, as well as its time and place of origin. The purpose of the *Libro Azúl* was to create images of an advanced and thriving province with a prosperous near future in order to attract private, especially foreign, investment (the text was bilingual, in Spanish and in English). Yet simultaneous with the *Libro Azúl*, other photographic images were produced that did not coincide with the modernizing landscape it portrayed: namely, the album of the official visit of President Alfredo González Flores to Guanacaste in 1916. [85] The president visited Guanacaste accompanied by a large delegation, including an official photographer—Manuel Gómez

[85] González Flores was not the first president to conduct a well-publicized official visit to the province. For example, in 1908 President Cleto González Víquez paid a very cheerful visit to Guanacaste. "El viaje a la frontera," *Páginas Ilustradas*, 5, no. 183, February 2, 1908.

Miralles—who documented the excursion in an album with fifty-four pictures.[86] The album's purpose was to tell the story of a caring president who exposed himself to hardship, traveling across a primitive backland where the only vehicles were horses and boats. There were no automobiles in the album—to the contrary, these were images of an emphatically undeveloped and rural province. The president and his large delegation were mainly pictured on horseback crossing rivers and grasslands (Fig. 2.10, 2.11, and 2.12), or rustically resting in hammocks (Fig. 2.13). In the album it is possible to read a story of a brave and gallant president, willing to spend days on horseback getting to know the territory just like a king on a trip of recognition of his vast kingdom, observing and experiencing first hand the primitiveness of Guanacaste. The album also featured the timid arrival of progress in the midst of the primitive landscape, posing one photo on a pedestrian bridge over the Tempisque River, built on the hacienda of one of the richest landowners of the province, Federico Sobrado, whose daughters appear in the picture with the president (Fig. 2.14).

[86] Manuel Gómez Miralles, *Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916* (San José, Costa Rica: Manuel Gómez Miralles, 1916).

Fig. 2.10. Paso Aguilar, Tenorio River. Source: Gómez Miralles, *Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916.*

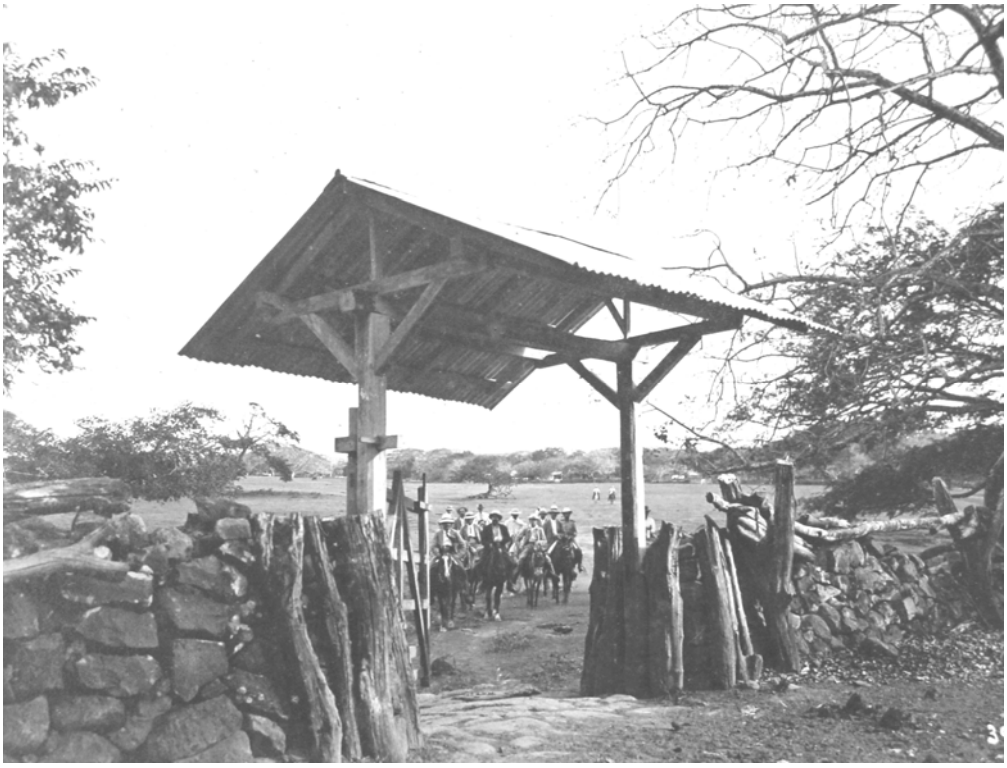

Fig. 2.11 Ciruelas. Source: Gómez Miralles, *Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916*.

Fig. 2.12 Local leaders and followers meeting the presidential delegation at its arrival at the capital of the province. Source: Gómez Miralles, *Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916.*

Fig. 2.13 Source: Gómez Miralles, *Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916*.

Fig. 2.14 The bridge of Federico Sobrado over Tempisque River. Source: Gómez Miralles*, Gira presidencial al Guanacaste, enero 1916*.

Gómez Miralles chose pictures of presidential activities exclusively to display in his album, and, consequently, only a few of the photos capture non-official people. Guanacastecans appear especially in pictures of official meetings in village and town public spaces, in which almost all the village people appear in their best clothes; of celebrations in honor of the President, including the *monta de toro* (bull-riding displays); or of social gatherings of the president with the elites of Liberia. In Gómez Miralles's album we cannot find the rural poor in their ordinary activities; there are no aspects of everyday life situations. Based on the album, we do not know how ordinary Guanacastecans lived, dressed, worked, or celebrated when the president was not present in their village. The album of the presidential visit to Guanacaste was a composition of

"selected slices"[87] of the official photographer's vision of the excursion, and as such, it is perhaps more a source of information on how the president's relation with the country's peripheries was imagined in the political realm, than a source for visualizing the everyday lives of contemporary Guanacastecans. Both the *Libro Azúl* and the album of the presidential visit provide sharply delimited pictures of Guanacaste: highly useful for analyzing the ideas of national and local elites and their rules of political and social behavior, and quite unhelpful for understanding other aspects of the reality of the province in 1916.

During the early twentieth century, Guanacaste and its backwardness generated interest on the part of a few Central Valley intellectuals, who were attracted by the cultural and racial "difference" of Guanacaste and Guanacastecans from the Central Highlands, considered the true Costa Rica. Since the mid-nineteenth century foreign travelers had been contrasting Guanacaste to the Central Highlands in terms of economy, social relations, culture, geography, and climate, and at the turn of the century Costa Rican publicists too began to express ideas about Guanacaste and Guanacastecans.[88] Although the systematic construction of the image of Guanacaste as the one mestizo region of Costa Rica and as a barbarous land without high culture would not begin until the 1930s, it is possible to identify some basic ideas already emerging in publications of the early twentieth century. Famous Costa Rican writer Carlos Gagini wrote in a column in 1900 that "en el habla del pueblo guanacasteco se emplea un sinnúmero de palabras y

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[87] Boris Kossoy, "Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Photography," in *Windows on Latin America: Understanding Society through Photographs*, edited by Robert M. Levine (Miami: North South Center; University of Miami, 1987), 39.

[88] Good examples are the travelers' accounts in Carlos Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste*, and Miguel Angel Quesada Pacheco, *Entre silladas y rejoyas*.

términos raros, completamente desconocidos para nosotros…"[89] By identifying Guanacastecans as different, strange, and unknown, Gagini established the perception of a Central Valley "us" facing a Guanacastecan "them," leading to the assumption that the language and culture of Central Valley was the standard and the point of reference, while Guanacastecan speech and way of life were strange, unknown, incomprehensible. Later publicists from the capital city would employ this language of difference and the representation of Guanacastecans as the mysterious "other" from different evaluative positions: some of them would explain Guanacastecan culture as barbarian and uncivilized; for others, it represented the only authentic Costa Rican culture, one that the rest of the society should cherish. Each of these visions would be marshaled to explain Guanacastecan backwardness and create Guanacastecan regional identity in the 1930s.

Conclusion

Costa Rican historian and geographer Francisco Montero Barrantes had described the natural and human riches of Guanacaste in 1892, stating that its small population had thus far prevented the province from achieving the material progress its resources portended.[90] According to Montero Barrantes, Guanacaste had a brilliant future guaranteed, if only the national government would step forward with efforts to promote agriculture and attract immigrants. Guanacastecan cocoa would be an extremely

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[89] "Provincialismos guanacastecos," *La Prensa Libre*, June 22, 1900, 2.

[90] The manuals of history and geography of Francisco Montero Barrantes (1864-1925) were among the first school textbooks used in Costa Rica. His *Elementos de historia de Costa Rica*, published in 1892, has been considered the "first real history of the country." Theodore S. Creedman, *Historical Dictionary of Costa Rica*, 2nd ed. (N.J. and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1991), 177. See also Juan Rafael Quesada Camacho, *Historia de la historiografía costarricense*, 1.ed., 1.reprint (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 178-183; Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costarricense por dicha: identidad nacional y cambio cultural en Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 20.

profitable product for export, he wrote, because it was of better quality than the Nicaraguan and Soconuscan varieties, and could easily substitute for coffee, whose price was dropping in the last decade of the nineteenth century.[91] His prophecy of national reorientation fell on deaf ears. Unlike in Argentina, where liberal elites saw the *pampa* as land of enormous potential for its natural resources, Costa Rican liberals—with the exception of a few intellectuals like Montero Barrantes—in the late nineteenth century could not visualize the *pampa guanacasteca*.[92] The omission of the province of Guanacaste from their national project was a result of the liberal program of developing only those areas of the country that were linked to the existing agro-export economy. From the second half of the nineteenth century onward, Costa Rica's liberal state saw only the Central Highlands and the two major ocean ports as significant to the nation's economy and future prosperity. The idea of a northwestern region rich in natural resources exerted no sway on the government's attention. For liberals it was more important to connect the country with international markets than to connect the different localities and regions of the country with each other. Development was supposed to come from abroad. That is one reason why internal communications with peripheral regions did not receive the attention of the state. To the extent that the government addressed the isolation of Guanacaste—impossible to ignore when dealing with certain matters of public administration and communications—the strategy was to condone rather than combat it: Thus, for instance, Guanacaste was given the right to issue its own

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[91] Francisco Montero Barrantes, *Compendio de geografía de Costa Rica*, 4th ed. (San José, Costa Rica: Tipografía Lehman, 1914), 72-73.

[92] Richard W. Slatta, *Comparing Cowboys & Frontiers: New Perspectives on the History of the Americas* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 21, 299.

fiscal instruments, including paper with the official seal and postal seals, which had no value outside of the province.[93]

As the Central Highlands progressed economically and materially and the discourse of progress and modernization became hegemonic in the country, Guanacastecans began increasingly to feel the backwardness of their province, a territory without access to the benefits of the booming agro-export economy. However, although there were already intimations that the province of Guanacaste had been kicked off the wagon of national progress, it was too early to affirm this situation would last forever, and publications like the *Libro Azúl* tended to blur the reality of backwardness when promoting Guanacaste as a land of great possibilities and promise. Guanacastecan elites did not choose to foreground the asymmetric modernization that was taking place in the country: instead, they worked to create an image of audacious people willing to do anything to achieve modernity and progress for their province. Neither the *Libro Azúl* nor Gómez Miralles's album had the purpose of presenting an accurate picture of Guanacaste, a picture that could have shown the life conditions of the majorities in the province. Each served particular ends, and the images of Guanacaste they chose to put on display were ones that, for the moment, fit the interests of national and provincial elites alike.

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[93] The Agreement no. 119 of September 3, 1885 declared that fiscal species sold in the province of Guanacaste did not have any value in other parts of the Republic. "El papel sellado, sellos, estampillas de timbre y de correo y demás especies fiscales marcadas con la leyenda 'Guanacaste', sólo podrán usarse en aquella provincia; y utilizadas en otro lugar, se tendrán por de ningún valor y efecto." *Coleccion de Leyes y Decretos* (1885), 483.

Chapter Three

The Emergence of Guanacaste Regionalism, 1900-1925

Introduction

During their first seven decades of belonging to the state of Costa Rica, Guanacastecan elites had not elaborated a regionalist (or provincialist) discourse or movement to defend their interests before the central state. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the dominant groups of the region had built their relationship with the state—or with the victorious factions of the struggles over state power—on expressions of loyalty and submission.[1] At the dawn of the twentieth century, however, some Guanacastecans began to criticize the central government in the press, openly accusing it of causing the backwardness of the province compared to the Central Highlands. At the same time, these authors urged their fellow provincial inhabitants to work for unity and to build a sense of belonging to the province. These local intellectuals and leaders—many of them primary school teachers—argued that Guanacaste was the most backward and abandoned province of the nation because the national state did not care about it in spite of Guanacastecans' historical loyalty to the Costa Rican state and its authorities. At the same time, they emphasized that their demands did not mean separatism or opposition to the national interest. On the contrary, to struggle for the improvement of the province was to struggle for the progress of the entire nation. Out of a deep love for the Fatherland (Costa Rica), they engaged in a great struggle, one that they felt deserved official recognition. These Guanacastecan publicists accepted the primacy of national identity

[1] See, for example, ANCR, Serie Municipal 991, f1.

and the subordination of regional identity to the national one, as *El Guanacaste* declared in 1910:

> Antes que guanacastecos somos costarricenses; vemos en Costa Rica, nuestra Patria, nuestra madre, ya que por consentimiento unánime y en no lejano tiempo, la aceptamos como tal. Llamaremos á sus puertas para pedir lo que como buenos hijos nos corresponde. Al trabajar por el Guanacaste, no se vaya á creer que tratamos de ahondar los ridículos odios provincianos; muy al contrario, nuestra labor es toda de fraternidad y concordia, estimamos a los demás y nos haremos conocer de ellos, para que á su vez nos estimen.[2]

During the first decades of the twentieth century the national print media gave space to Guanacastecan writers and was sympathetic to claims that Guanacaste was an unjustly abandoned province, the *Cinderella* of the Republic. The representation of Guanacaste as Cinderella suggested a media conception of Guanacastecans as harmless beings, deserving pity from their compatriots. The print media even expressed sympathy for the demands Guanacastecans made on the national state and the rest of Costa Rican society. However, as we shall see in the following chapter, when in the second half of the 1930s regionalist political organization took shape and a political party was founded, the treatment of Guanacastecan regionalism by the national press changed. With the creation of the Casa de Guanacaste (1934), the periodical *El Guanacaste* (1935), and the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca (1937), the previously sympathetic press began to criticize, challenge, and suspect Guanacastecan regionalism.

The concept of region used here refers both to the territory of the province of Guanacaste and to the province as a space imagined by the initial promoters of regionalism. These authors imagined the province as a region with special

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[2] *El Guanacaste*, no. 1, [without month] 28, 1910, p.1.

characteristics, with a unique history and cultural identity, and therefore with specific interests to defend before the national state. Guanacastecan regionalism, in this period, was not an organized political movement, not even an articulated program of purposes and actions. Rather it was a heterogeneous group of desires and ideas that began shyly to take shape as a regional "consciousness" at the beginning of the twentieth century.[3] This incipient regionalism did not resemble the separatist regionalist movement of Western Guatemalan elites, say, in the nineteenth century.[4] The first promoters of Guanacastecan regionalism did not aspire to autonomy or to lessen the presence of the central state in the region. They wanted more central state involvement, not less: their demand was that the state do more to promote the development of their province.

What follows is a brief presentation of the first Guanacastecan regionalist expressions, many of them journalistic, prior to the political movement that arose in the 1930s. It concludes with an analysis of the diffusion of regionalism in the national press and the relation of regionalist arguments to national politics in the conjuncture of the commemoration of the centenary of the annexation of the District of Nicoya to Costa

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[3] According to Carlos Dávila, the first political movement with regional characteristics was the *Unión Guanacasteca*, founded by two Guanacastecan congressmen Francisco Mayorga Rivas and Antonio Álvarez Hurtado in 1905. The expressed purpose of this organization was, in words of Dávila, to "unify the Guanacastecan family to fight against the regional abandonment," and it had its own periodical called *Unión*. However, in the presidential elections of 1906, the *Unión Guanacasteca* supported a non-Guanacastecan candidate, Cleto González Víquez, a clear sign of the Guanacastecan politicians' intimate relations to the national parties in power. Primary school teacher Clímaco A. Pérez, from Santa Cruz, was a congressman in the 1920s and focused on defending the province's interests. He also participated in the foundation of the Sociedad Pro Guanacaste. So far I have found very little documentation of these early-twentieth-century regionalist organizations, which suggests that they did not have a major impact in the country or the province. See Carlos Dávila Cubero, ¡*Viva Vargas! Historia del Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca* (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Guayacán, 1987), pp. 53-54. See also *Profesor Clímaco Pérez, educador, político, revolucionario y escritor: homenaje del Ministerio de Educación Pública* (San José, Costa Rica: Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1975).

[4] Véase Arturo Taracena, "El regionalismo *altense* y la élite ladina de Quetzaltenango (1880-1920)," en *TRACE* (37) junio 2000.

Rica, in 1925. The centenary of annexation turned out to be a bitter frustration for an important group of Guanacastecan intellectuals and activists, who had hoped that it would become an opportunity to vindicate the place the province deserved within the nation. The disillusionment caused by the official commemoration procedures of the centenary of annexation would be crucial for the formation of a strong—but brief—regionalist political organization in the second half of the 1930s.

The Emergence of the Guanacastecan Press

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Costa Rica's printed press boomed. In 1892, there were ten typographies in Costa Rica, nine of them in San José and most of them owned by foreigners. The introduction of new printing technologies increased the production of print materials and periodicals.[5] The economic growth born of agro-export expansion increased the number of printing houses and the demand for printed materials. Expanding state investment in public education brought a growing production of textbooks for schools, and the resultant expansion of literacy meant an ever-growing market for cultural and agriculture magazines, pamphlets, brochures, and political periodicals. Some 104 magazines and 85 newspapers were published from 1903 to 1914.[6] In 1913, *Pandemonium* reported that there were twenty-three periodical publications circulating in the capital city and nine in the provinces.[7]

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[5] Mario Samper K. et al, "El arte de imprimir. Los oficios tipográficos en la ciudad de San José, 1830-1960," Ponencia presentada en el Tercer Congreso Centroamericano de Historia, San José, Costa Rica, 15-18 de julio 1996, 14-15.

[6] Ivan Molina Jiménez and Steven Palmer, *La voluntad radiante: cultura impresa, magia y medicina popular en Costa Rica (1897-1932)* (San José, Costa Rica: Porvenir; Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1996), 30.

[7] *Pandemonium* 8, no. 85, January 1, 1913, 18.

The advance of the democratic-electoral political system also generated new publishing activities. According to Samper et al., as the social base of political movements widened, electoral propaganda activities surged, with an associated expansion of political groups' demand for printed materials. Workers' mutualist and unionist organizations published periodicals to publicize their political positions and draw their members together. "In summary, the period 1880 to 1930 was characterized by technological innovation and diversity, with different types of composition and the printing of newspapers, leaflets, books, cards, forms, etc."[8] In this context of growing literacy rates and expanding markets for publications, print media produced in the Central Highlands and, secondarily, in Guanacaste became the main vehicle of the first regionalist ideas and identifications.[9]

Attempts to create newspapers in Guanacaste began at the end of the nineteenth century: first, basically, with the purpose of informing people about events on the Nicaraguan border and in Guanacastecan villages and towns, and later, seeking to stimulate among Guanacastecans the sense of belonging to the province and interest in participating in its improvement. The first attempts to set up regular periodicals, in the 1870s, explicitly recognized the existence of provincial interests as such, indeed claimed them as the papers' *raison d'être*. According to Adolfo Blen, in 1873 a four-page weekly

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[8] "En resumen, el período 1880-1930 se caracterizó por la innovación y la diversidad tecnológicas, con diferentes tipos de composición e impresión para periódicos, volantes, libros, tarjetas, formularios, etc." Samper et al, "El arte de imprimir," 15, 18.

[9] The regionalist press cannot be defined simply as the press edited on the provincial or local level, because the most important regionalist publications were printed and circulated in the capital city. The regionalist press was characterized by its dedication to advance the perceived interests of the province before the state and the rest of the society. In the years 1880 to 1899, 98% of books and pamphlets and 88% of periodicals and magazines in Costa Rica were edited in the capital city. Iván Molina Jiménez, *Costarricense por dicha: identidad nacional y cambio cultural en Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), 19.

magazine began to circulate in Liberia; it was called *El Progreso de Guanacaste*, and was "consecrated to the service of the moral, material, and political interests of the province."[10] The *Eco de la Frontera* (the Echo of the Border) circulated some years later.[11]

The first publications had an ephemeral life and it was not until the last years of the nineteenth century that more successful initiatives to create a periodical for the province appeared. At the turn of the century, Guanacastecan intellectuals enthusiastically began to use the press to call the inhabitants of the province to unite, to monitor the political representatives of Guanacaste in the congress and to denounce the abandonment of the province by the central government. In 1897, *El Guanacasteco* began to circulate in the capital, San José, with the explicit purpose of promoting the "interests of the province."[12] The owner and editor was Emilio Alpízar, and the newspaper had an active group of local agents, whose names were published on the front page.[13] *El Guanacasteco* inaugurated its work saying that it wanted to "contribute... to fulfill the high social aims that are commended to the Press, principally guarding the interests of the Province of Guanacaste, with the hope that in its difficult work, it will

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[10] Adolfo Blen, *Historia del periodismo* (San José: Editorial Costa Rica, 1983), 195. I have found no issues of *Progress of Guanacaste.* In addition to *The Progress* and *The Echo*—according to Blen—*Boletin de Noticias* circulated in Liberia: "several numbers circulated in 1874 providing details of the revolution commanded by don Joaquín Fernández in Puntarenas." Ibid., 198.

[11] According to *El Guanacasteco,* its only forerunner had been the *Eco de la Frontera,* however, Adolfo Blen (see preceding footnote) suggests other periodicals circulated even before the *Eco*. *El Guanacasteco*, January 31, 1897, 1. According to the database of the National Library of Costa Rica, the *Eco de la Frontera* circulated in 1877, however, I have not been able to find any issue of it.

[12] *El Guanacasteco*, January 31, 1897, 1.

[13] Liberia: F. Faerron, Nicoya: Alberto Flores, Santa Cruz: Telésforo Ramirez, Bagaces: Rafael Recio, Cañas: Inocente Mojica, Filadelfia: Leandro Obando and Sardinal: Jose Cabezas. The agent in Puntarenas was Laureano Velázquez. Ibid.

find that active and effective support that is always required to take the first steps."[14] *El Guanacasteco* also published chronicles of the towns, something very common for national as well as regional and local newspapers of time. For example, in 1897, the newspaper narrated the following regarding Santa Cruz:

> Esta importante villa progresa admirablemente, sus habitantes de por sí laboriosos, tienen el laudable empeño en que la población sea una de las más bonitas de la provincia: es muy notable su movimiento comercial y cuenta con numerosos establecimientos muy bien montados.
>
> Es uno de los cantones más poblados del Guanacaste quizá por ser el centro de los grandes cortes de maderas que actualmente se hacen en sus bosques inmediatos.[15]

With such enthusiastic and complimentary descriptions of the towns of the province, *El Guanacasteco* undertook to create local unity and pride and, at the same time, a sense of belonging to a greater family: the province of Guanacaste. In other words, the task was to generate in Guanacastecans an attachment to their "terruño" (native soil) and through it—and complementing it—to their province. [16] In spite of the expectations and enthusiasm generated by the provincial newspaper, only a few issues of *El Guanacasteco* circulated.[17]

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[14] "[C]ontribuir... á que se llenen los altos fines sociales que á la Prensa están encomendados, velando principalmente por los intereses de la Provincia de Guanacaste, con la esperanza de que en su difícil labor, encontrará ese activo y eficaz apoyo que se requiere siempre al dar los primeros pasos." Ibid.

[15] *El Guanacasteco*, February 7, 1897, 3.

[16] The concept of *terruño* has been defined by the Mexican historian Luis González: "Un terruño es un espacio corto, abarcable de una sola mirada hecha desde las torres del templo parroquial o desde una loma." In order to distinguish *terruño* from region, González states that "the brief community of terruño" is "where the bonds of blood and mutual knowledge predominate," whereas region is "the medium size community… where economic links are particularly important." Luis González, "Terruño, microhistoria y ciencias sociales," en: Pedro Pérez Herrero, comp., *Región e historia en México (1700-1850): métodos de análisis regional*, 1ª reimpresión (México: Instutituto Mora / UAM, 1997), 26-27. Guanacastecan authors did not clearly distinguish *terruño* from *region*, and in some publications, they used *terruño* to talk about to the province within the national context.

[17] There are only four issues in the National Library of Costa Rica.

Between 1890 and 1892, the biweekly *El Heraldo* was published in Puntarenas and Guanacaste,[18] and in 1899 *Heraldo de Cañas*, a monthly magazine, began to circulate in the village of Cañas.[19] *Heraldo de Cañas* identified itself as the organ of the municipality of Cañas and declared its intention to support the municipal government in its effort to improve the educational level of Cañas's inhabitants:

> Aunar sus esfuerzos á los de la Jefatura Política para la consecución del engradecimiento material é intelectual del Cantón de Cañas; fundar escuelas de adultos; metodizar la educación según los sanos principios de la moderna Pedagogía; dar al desheredado los útiles que necesita para instruirse; estimular al educador con remuneraciones justas, vigilarlo para que no frustre los planes educativos; ocupar al gendarme en conducir á la escuela niños renuentes á los beneficios de la enseñanza; desterrar la rutina de las aulas para disminuir la cifra de los educandos autómatas; favorecer la cultura; encarrilar la instrucción por la amplia vía que marca la recta razón y el sensato criterio; preparar generaciones útiles para el porvenir; llenar un deber altamente social; proveer con diligencia á la siembra de hoy para cosechar seguros frutos mañana...[20]

Concerned for Guanacastecans' access to education and convinced of the value of *modern pedagogy* as a tool to achieve progress in their community, the editors of *Heraldo de Cañas* strongly believed that their publication would contribute to the educational development of young people and adults in the municipality. The plan of action shared by the municipal government and the newspaper emphasized the role of locals in the liberal state project of economic, political, and cultural modernization, already underway in the center of the country. The municipality yearned to progress, and the *Heraldo de Cañas* would be an active supporter of that cause.

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[18] According to the records of the National Library of Costa Rica.

[19] The editor and publisher was Benjamín Novoa. The colaborators were Rodolfo Menéndez, Elías Granados, Hermenegildo Angulo, Ismael Alvarado, Rafael Acosta H., Augusto Grillo, and the administrador, Felipe Rodríguez Ansaldo.

[20] *Heraldo de Cañas*, N°1, August 1899.

In October 1900 a newspaper called *La Vanguardia* began to circulate in Liberia. This new paper identified itself as "a weekly political magazine of general interests."[21] In 1901, it appeared as a biweekly, self-proclaimed as the "*organ of the* Partido Civil *in Guanacaste.*"[22] In its first edition *La Vanguardia* set out "to raise the province of Guanacaste from the prostration" caused by the national government's negligence and abandonment.[23] Among other newspapers that circulated in Guanacaste at the turn of the century were *La Nación* (1899), *El Imparcial* (1900), *El Nuevo Siglo* (1900), and *El Nuevo Régimen* (1902-1903 and 1919-1920).[24]

In 1910 *El Guanacaste* came out, with the explicit objective of constructing unity in Guanacaste and promoting among its inhabitants the sense of belonging to the Province. This newspaper worked systematically to create a regional consciousness among Guanacastecans and to inculcate in its inhabitants the will to work for the benefit of the province. *El Guanacaste* managed to consolidate itself more than any previous publication as a promoter of regionalism. The first issue of *El Guanacaste* declared that its mission was to "fulfill the imperative local need: to remove the endemic apathy of our fellow countrymen and familiarize the rest of the country with our resources, our personalities, all our needs; in a word, to study in the present our native soil."[25] Soon

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[21] *La Vanguardia*, October 24, 1900.

[22] *La Vanguardia*, March 10, 1901, 1.

[23] "…levantar la provincia de Guanacaste de la postración. " *La Vanguardia*, October 24, 1900, 2.

[24] According to the records of the National Library of Costa Rica, the *Boletín de Noticias* circulated in Puntarenas, Liberia and San José; *La Nación* biweekly in Liberia; *El Imparcial*, biweekly in Liberia; *El Nuevo Siglo*, weekly in Liberia; and *El Nuevo Régimen* was published by Imprenta de Liberia.

[25] "…cumplir con una imperiosa necesidad local: remover la apatía endémica de nuestros coterráneos y hacer conocer en el resto del país, nuestros recursos, nuestras personalidades, nuestras necesidades todas; en una palabra, el estudio actual del terruño." *El Guanacaste*, no. 1, [without month] 28, 1910, 1.

letters to the editor became echoes of *El Guanacaste*'s regionalist propaganda, showing the satisfaction of many Guanacastecan readers with the newspaper's mission of orienting and educating people in the province. For example, a letter to the editor stated the following in September 1910:

> "El Guanacaste" viene á llenar una necesidad imperiosa, porque la provincia que lleva su nombre, tiene hijos de empuje, pero que necesitan orientación, y que se les marque una buena senda, senda que los saque de ese letargo oprobioso en que viven y los conduzca á una éra de legítimas y sanas aspiraciones. Es preciso al mismo tiempo conocer la causa de nuestras desdichas; necesitamos en pocas palabras: Unión, fraternidad!, y conseguirlo es el empeño de "El Guanacaste."[26]

In addition to the task of enlightenment and orientation, the newspaper recognized the need to build conciliation and unity not only within the province and the country but extending to Central America and beyond, as can be seen in the following quote from *El Guanacaste* in 1910:

> Dejando á un lado los odios de partido... y sin descender jamás al peligroso terreno personal, trabajaremos por la Patria... trataremos de fortificar los lazos que nos unen con nuestros hermanos de CentroAmérica [sic] y con los demás pueblos hispanos; defenderemos los sagrados derechos del pueblo y sus libertades, combatiendo las injustas agresiones del rico contra el pobre, del gamonal contra el humilde ciudadano.[27]

The editors of *El Guanacaste* were conscious of the difficulty that Guanacastecans' affiliations to traditional national political parties represented for the construction of regional unity. In order to try to surpass the divisions the national parties caused in the region, *El Guanacaste* linked its regionalist propaganda not only to patriotism but also to ideas related to Hispano-Americanism, preaching brotherhood with

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[26] "Carta del lector," *El Guanacaste*, September 25, 1910, 1.

[27] *El Guanacaste*, no. 1, [without month] 28, 1910, 1.

the rest of Central America and all Latin America. The notion of Central America as the *Patria Grande* had not been discarded, and the ideal of unity among "Hispanic peoples" was now included among the regionalist ideals. We see, too, in this passage that analyses of class relations in the region were also present at the beginning of the debates on the problems of the province in *El Guanacaste*.[28]

Simultaneously with its fervent patriotism *El Guanacaste* expressed dissatisfaction with the central government, accusing it of having abandoned the province of Guanacaste. Bitterness towards the government was sometimes accompanied by quite audacious hints, such as this 1910 comparison of the case of Guanacaste with that of Panama:

> NADIE EXPERIMENTA EN CABEZA AJENA. Colombia perdió á Panamá por el centralismo que con ese Dpto. usó, por creer que para la fraternidad y buena armonía era necesario que todos los empleos estuvieran servidos por gentes del interior; por el aire despectivo que los capitolinos [sic] gastaban con los panameños, lo que produjo en estos odio implacable hacia aquellos. Eso, aquí nadie lo ignora, y sin embargo, nuestro Gobierno sigue paso á paso la senda que parece trazar para él el Gobierno ultramontano de Colombia. No olviden lectores que hablo de Guanacaste.[29]

Did the editor of *El Guanacaste* compare Guanacaste to Panama in order to frighten the central government? The author certainly was aware of the particular way in

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[28] It is possible to identify two main approaches to the problems of Guanacaste beginning in the first declarations of *El Guanacaste*. Some maintained that the abandonment of Guanacaste by the central state had caused its problems, while others blamed *latifundismo* and *gamonalismo*—the province's internal socio-economic structures—for its backwardness. These two approaches became more defined in the 1930s, and led to important differences of opinion within the regionalist movement.

[29] *El Guanacaste*, October 23, 1910, 3. A U.S. company had signed a treaty with Costa Rican government in 1888 to build canal route through Costa Rican territory in case of necessity. "In the same year the Costa Rican governmen, in an effort to impede canal-related speculation, prohibited all claims of state lanas in the area north of a line between Tortuguero, on the Atlantic coast, and Murciélago, on the Pacific." See Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: The Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica Since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992),, 58. Edelman also notes that influential *hacendados* denounced lands in the territory of prohibition without problems. Ibid., 59.

which the Panamanian republic had been created with US support, and like all of his generation had witnessed the increasing interventions of the United States in Central America and the Caribbean at the beginning of the century. Nevertheless, the idea of Guanacaste becoming independent with the support of U.S. gunboats must have sounded a little exaggerated; at least, it is an idea that found little echo in the readers of *El Guanacaste*. Some Guanacastecan publicists did indeed try to paint the possibility of the seizure of Guanacaste by the U.S. as a real risk if the Costa Rican government did not make its presence more effective in the province. Others saw the growing presence of the U.S. in Panama and Nicaragua as a cause for concern, and they instructed Guanacastecan schoolchildren—as teacher Abraham Mayorga instructed his students on Independence Day in 1910—to be in alert and struggle if something similar to Panama or Nicaragua was about to happen in Guanacaste.[30]

El Guanacaste was, then, the first enduring and regular regional newspaper, established with the intention of creating unity in the Province. By 1910, the editors of *El Guanacaste* projected a clear regional consciousness and a mission to forge unity among the inhabitants of Guanacaste. The central issue for the Guanacastecan periodicals was the abandonment of the province by the national state. Another important issue was the relationship between the province and the rest of society, as editors denounced the discrimination they perceived against Guanacaste by the entire nation, as in this passage from *El Guanacaste*—

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[30] Abraham Mayorga Rivas, president of educational board of Liberia, declared in his independence day celebration speech that the abandonment of the province by the government could lead to its occupation by a foreign power willing to use the territory for canal building: "debemos mantener latente nosotros los centroamericanos para contener el avance del coloso del Norte cuya águila tiene ya una garra en Panamá y otra en la desgraciada hermana Nicaragua; ese y no otro es el que debe de existir en nuestros pechos para el caso en que osando el enemigo común adueñarse de nuestro suelo amado, podamos llenos de santa ira é irresistible arranque de patriotismo…" *El Guanacaste*, October 16, 1910, 2.

> DA PENA ver lo escueto de las oficinas del Juzgado: feo local, malos muebles, pocos útiles. Por allá en San José, el GRAN PULPO que nos devora y arruina, se comen la *res pública* [sic] solos; qué grajos! Qué egoistas![31]

—or the following supposed reproduction of a street dialogue:

> ...oímos a dos golfos... "Eso lo hace el Supremo Gobierno por aquello de la confraternidad tico guanacasteca y porque [tú, que no conoces los intringulis de la política, lo ignoras] porque se trata de convertir el Guanacaste [no te rías, guasón, no es el nuestro, es el Departamento, el Guanacaste Nica] en una inmensa Casa de corrección, como quien dice, un gran albañal de la República.[32]

The central government and its policies towards the province were discussed with bitter irony. The new provincial press denounced the disregard and lack of respect that it considered to have been expressed in the policies of the central government towards the province of Guanacaste since the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya. One way to fulfill the mission of creating consciousness was to monitor and influence the work of the Guanacastecan representatives in the national congress from the pages of the newspaper. Congressional deputies who did not act in the way expected of a Guanacastecan deputy were the objects of merciless criticism. In September 1910, the cover of *El Guanacaste* bore the title "*Briceño y Guido en el Congreso. ¿Dónde se halla el ombligo del último? ¿Miedo ó desamor al terruño?*" The column explained that by proposing in Congress the creation of a secondary school for studies of cattle ranching and agriculture, Guanacastecan congressman Briceño had honored the town that had voted for him. Meanwhile Congressman Guido had disappointed the inhabitants of Guanacaste by opposing the Briceño's proposal, drawing this response from the newspaper:

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[31] *El Guanacaste*, September 18, 1910, 3.

[32] *El Guanacaste*, September 25, 1910, 2.

> Oiga Ud. señor Guido: ... Después de muchos trabajos... pude adquirir su fe de bautismo fechada y rubricada en Bagaces... El hecho es el hecho: Ud. es guanacasteco, aun cuando le pese, aun cuando los guanacastecos le retiren por su mal comportamiento la carta de ciudadanía…[33]

On other occasions the deputies were castigated in the pages of *El Guanacaste* for not doing anything in Congress. "¿ENIGMA? ¿Qué hacen en el Congreso los representantes del Gte [sic]? No se les oye ni roncar. Qué sueño más cómodo y profundo!"[34]

Just like Guanacaste's representatives within the national political structure, other politicians in important positions could find themselves the targets of *El Guanacaste*'s poisonous darts. In 1910, the paper attacked the President because he had not fulfilled a single one of his electoral promises for the province of Guanacaste. According to the column, roads were still not built, public offices were still scantly equipped, agriculture and cattle rearing did not receive any governmental support, and administrative abuses persisted. No positive changes had happened for Guanacastecans: to the contrary the government treated them "like pariahs and disinherited ones"; no position in state administration in Guanacaste was occupied by a Guanacastecan "as would be natural; as happens in the other provinces, where centralism is not as overwhelming as here."[35] Interestingly, the denunciations of abandonment were mixed with reproaches against state centralism. On the one hand, the state had forgotten the province and, on the other, it imposed political employees who were not from the province and did no good for the province. In October of 1910, *El Guanacaste* wrote:

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[33] *El Guanacaste*, September 18, 1910, 1.

[34] *El Guanacaste*, September [without date], 1910, 3.

[35] "…como sería lo natural, como sucede en las otras provincias, donde el centralismo no se ha hecho sentir tan avasalladoramente como aquí." *El Guanacaste*, September 18, 1910, 1.

> La política tico guanacasteca continúa. La confraternidad consiguiente, es casi un hecho. El bienestar y la tranquilidad son generales (*coroneles, dicen otros*)... Sí, tata Ricardo, no lo ponga en duda su Mercé, la tranquilidad es general en Liberia, todos, toítos, estamos perfecta, herméticamente trancados (*tranquilidad viene de tranca, papá Ricardo).*[36]

Although *El Guanacaste* seemed successful, for unknown reasons it ceased appearing at the end of 1911, and for more than twenty-three years there was no important regular publication dedicated to the promotion of regionalism. On the first of January, 1935, a newspaper with the name *El Guanacaste* began to circulate again, although its 1935 (re)founders did not seem aware that there had been a predecessor of the same name more than twenty years earlier. As we shall see in the next chapter, *El Guanacaste* of the 1930s would become an important promoter of a cultural and political regionalist movement until then unimaginable.

The *Cinderella* of the Republic: The Emergence of Guanacastecan Regionalism in the Costa Rican Press

Beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth, not only the Guanacastecan press, but also the San José and Central Valley papers began to carry articles from time to time that lamented the isolation and backwardness of Guanacaste and blamed the central government for the lack of modernization in the northwest region of the country. The authors of these columns or notes—who were generally Guanacastecan themselves—pointed out specific problems within the province and expressed opinions similar to those of a Guanacastecan correspondent in the *Prensa Libre* in 1900:

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[36] *El Guanacaste*, October 23, 1910, 3.

> Lo apartado que se encuentra el Guanacaste de los centros de población y las dificultades que existen para comunicarnos con la capital de la República por falta de vías expeditas y cómodas para viajar son causas más que suficientes para que marchemos tan lentamente por la sendas de la civilización. Para colmo de desgracias ni las principales autoridades que han gobernado la provincia jamás se preocuparon por el bienestar y adelanto de estos pueblos que debieran, por muchas causas, ser los más florecientes del país.... La ley de caminos ha sido ineficaz y nunca se ha cumplido.[37]

The idea that began to be repeated in the national press at the start of the twentieth century was that the central state had left the province in isolation and abandonment, and even when it passed laws in favor of the development of Guanacaste, rarely followed through on them. The same men who wrote for the provincial press declared in the national papers that since annexation the province of Guanacaste had suffered disrespect and abandonment from government officials and other national politicians. Moreover, they argued, revenue generated by the province for the national treasury was spent instead on the towns, cantons, and cities of the "interior" (that is, the Central Highlands). Among these cities, the capital was the "octopus" that devoured the largest portion of state resources, regardless of whence they came. The capital and the cities of the "interior" were like the stepmother and stepsisters, greedily seizing everything including the profit generated by Cinderella, the beautiful and oppressed province of Guanacaste, who waited patiently for justice and whose economic value and cultural riches still lacked the national recognition they deserved.

By giving space to Guanacastecans to articulate these complaints, the national press was participating in the gestational process of Guanacastecan regionalism. In their

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[37] *La Prensa Libre*, January 9, 1900, 2. This paper regularly published notes on the different localities of the province of Guanacaste, usually dealing with local politics, problems of lack or misfunctioning of some public service or inftrastructure, crimes, overcrowded prisons, lack of access to health care, fires, accidents, and other local events.

willingness to portray Guanacaste as a Cinderella, at the dawn of the twentieth century the national press depicted Guanacastecans as inoffensive and deserving of sympathy for their complaints again the national state and the rest of Costa Rican society. Once regionalist political organizing began in the mid-1930s, non-Guanacastecan papers began to give Guanacastecan political phenomena a far more critical, even hostile, treatment. This change likely owed to the fact that a new regionalist party had begun to threaten the electoral success of the traditional national parties within Guanacaste's municipal governments, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Looking at the national newspapers published over the first decades of the twentieth century, one can see that during times of electoral conflict the eternally abandoned and forgotten province of Guanacaste was—suddenly and as if by magic—fully incorporated into the nation. The province of Guanacaste and the Guanacastecan municipalities were fully present and visible in the press. The provincial press as well as the national utilized regional problems as fodder in electoral disputes. Among the themes debated in the national press regarding the province of Guanacaste were the problems derived from isolation, the lack of services and infrastructure, the lack of economic development policy, and the lack of cultural policies, especially educational policy. All of this debate was carried out in the context of a growing construction of regional identity and regionalist political discourse.

How did the national state react to the first signs of Guanacastecan regionalism? What can we perceive in the pages of the national press? Newspaper coverage sheds important light on the representations of Guanacaste and its ills that were at play on the national stage in that era. Studying these representations will make it easier for us to

understand and explain the state policies toward the region and the relationship between the central government and the promoters of regionalism.

The conjuncture of the centenary of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to the state of Costa Rica is an ideal historical moment at which to analyze the relationship between national state and the emerging regionalist political movement with its increasingly intense demands. Guanacastecan elites and regional and national intellectuals and politicians alike attempted to take advantage of the official celebration of the centenary in order to cement an august place for the province within the Costa Rican nation. In order to achieve this, they utilized the pages of national newspapers to insist on the historical importance of the annexation and the current importance of its commemoration for the nation as a whole. Indeed, it was in the pages of daily newspapers that these elites and intellectuals began to construct a collective official memory of the historical facts of annexation.

The Centenary of Cinderella: The Awakening of Sleeping Beauty?

The decision of the central government to celebrate officially the centenary of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya probably owed more to the immediate circumstances of electoral politics than to any real desire to respond appropriately to the demands of an abandoned province. When in July 1923 the first initiative to commemorate the centenary began, the electoral campaign for the presidency was about to begin—and debates and decisions in Congress could be utilized to acquire votes. Congressional deputy (and former president) Ricardo Jiménez became the most vocal proponent of the official commemoration, carrying out an extensive effort to gain the trust of the Guanacastecans who had been so frustrated with his former government.

The first proposals regarding the commemoration and suggestions regarding appropriate forms of carrying it out came from two men of Nicoya. On June 12, 1923, congressional deputy Leonidas Briceño gave a speech before Congress expounding on the importance of celebrating the centenary of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya.[38] Several days later, teacher Higinio Vega Orozco, who had received a scholarship "corresponding to Guanacaste" to study in the Normal School in 1907,[39] and who by the 1920s had come to be one of the foremost promoters of Guanacastecan pride in the national press, wrote in the *Diario de Costa Rica* that he thought that "la celebración del Centenario de la adscripción del Guanacaste a Costa Rica, es la apoteosis más visible de nuestra Historia," and proposed the elaboration of a book about Guanacastecan regionalism.[40] For that purpose, according to Vega, is was necessary to send "un delegado a la Curia y Biblioteca de Nicaragua donde hay lujoso acopio de datos sobre nuestros primeros pasos religiosos y políticos, a fin que recavarlos."[41] Additionally, Vega proposed that the government appoint a photographer to travel throughout

> … los pueblos del Guanacaste para obtener también un álbum que dentro de 100 años dé idea de todas las escuelas, edificios públicos, históricos, municipales, costumbres, escenas, etc., etc, de estos tiempos, porque en ese lejano entonces los motivos de progreso dejarán advertir la ausencia de lo que transitoriamente pertenece hoy a nuestra época y las consecuencias evolutivas de su trayectoria deslumbrante.[42]

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[38] In that session of June 12, the Congress had decided to send the iniciative to the Comission of Public Education. See ANCR Congreso 13051.

[39] *Páginas Ilustradas* 4, no. 144, May 5, 1907, back cover.

[40] "Colaboración de los maestros. Centenario de la adscripción del Guanacaste," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 19, 1923, 2.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

Vega considered the preparation of a packet of documents for future generations to be indispensable, since one hundred years hence the hand of progress would have erased everything. The past mattered, but the future did too: just as in 1924 it was vital to hark back to the founding leaders of the province, in 2024 it would be necessary to recall the Guanacaste of yesteryear. Furthermore, the compilation of such a history book would renew, as it were, the marriage vows between nation and province. It would be "una prueba palmaria de regocijo que provoca el estro patriótico al recuerdo de la fusión de nuestros cariños bajo el hogar de esa hermosa Costa Rica, donde confundidos en un solo amor, veneramos en su bandera la grandeza y la magestad de sus libertades."[43] As Vega visualized it, tales and histories of Guanacaste's past would be published daily in the national papers and a special committee in Nicoya would be in charge of having them bound together as a book in time for the day of the centenary. Each newspaper would be asked to send in eight copies of each article published, and the Library Committee of Nicoya would bind them together to form eight identical books: seven for the province of Guanacaste and one for the National Library. Inspired, Vega went further:

> Sí; digamos a todos los hijos de Costa Rica que hayan publicado libros, folletos, ensayos literarios, poesías, mapas, revistas, etc., que honren al Comité Bibliotecario de Nicoya con un ejemplar de cada una de sus publicaciones y formemos una Biblioteca especial y única donde las generaciones futuras encuentren la intelectualidad costarricense intencionalmente reunida en el pueblo más antiguo de Costa Rica.[44]

As "the oldest town in Costa Rica," Nicoya deserved the place of honor in the nation and had a special right to be the site of a national bibliographic repository. Nicoya

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

would be the bridge that would unite the past and the future; it would be a binding tie between nation and province. Indeed, the portraits of Tomás Guardia y Ascención Esquivel should be hung in the municipal hall "in a solemn civil ceremony," "and let it be in front of the image of these two distinguished patricians under the flag of Costa Rica, where we—especially Guanacastecans—raise our patriotic Marseillaise on the day of the centenary…"[45] Undoubtedly, for Teacher Vega and many other Guanacastecans, the official celebration of the centenary presented an opportunity not only to convert their province into a true and esteemed member of the Costa Rican nation but to claim for it a special, privileged place within the national family: a status that Guanacaste had more than deserved, they did not doubt, for one hundred years.

The same day that Vega Orozco published this column in the *Diario de Costa Rica*, Congress debated proposals to commemorate officially the centennial, and concluded by assigning a significant budget for "development projects [*obras de fomento*] for Guanacaste." The sun seemed to be shining on Guanacaste, since the proposed projects included the construction of water lines, a school, and a municipal hall for Nicoya; a hospital for Santa Cruz; repairs to the Puerto Jesus dock and the dredging of the estuary; land surveys in the canton of Liberia; and a bridge over the Tempisque River between Carrillo and Liberia.[46]

The reaction of the Guanacastecan congressional deputies to this open-handed proposal was contradictory. Congressman Baltodano—originally from Liberia, and a

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[45] "…y que sea justamente ante la imagen de esos dos egregios patricios colocados bajo el pabellón de Costa Rica, donde elevemos el día del Centenario—los guanacastecos con mayor razón—un anaclético de patriótica marsellesa..." Ibid.

[46] "Congreso constitucional. El Representante Jiménez pide varias obras de fomento para el Guanacaste," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 20, 1923, 4.

resident of Santa Cruz—objected to the planned distribution of money because, in his judgment, the cantons of Liberia and Carrillo did not receive just treatment. To this the representative from Nicoya, Leonidas Briceño, answered the government had given "more than one hundred thousand *colones* to Liberia," and that Liberian authorities had mistreated Nicoyans during the construction of water lines in that city. Liberia had just received a good school building and, according to Briceño, other Guanacastecans had observed in silence the central government's favoritism toward the Liberians. Furthermore, it must not be forgotten that the original pronouncement of annexation had come from Nicoya: for that reason, clearly, Nicoya deserved greater consideration. But Briceño said he was aware that the official budget could not stretch to cover all needs, and if what he was asking for Nicoya seemed excessive, it would also be sufficient "que se decrete una modesta placa conmemorativa, declarándolo pueblo amado..."[47] The conflictive exchange revealed the existence of serious resentments and rivalries among the political elites of the different localities in the province.

Seeing the direction that the debate was taking, the deputy from Cartago, Aragón, proposed that "all the communities that participated in the movement for annexation" should share in the benefits of this occasion. Deputy Jiménez, for his part, said that the Republic was poor, "pero así como cuando en un hogar se trata de celebrar las bodas de oro no se escatiman fondos, así debemos proceder en este caso."[48] Congress ended up adding on to the original proposal the construction of a municipal building for Filadelfia and authorizing the treasury to emit 47,000 *colones* in so-called "revolutionary" bonds,

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

authorized by the Law no. 16 of July 13, 1920. The monies generated by the "revolutionary bonds" would be distributed in the following manner[49]:

Water supply for Nicoya	4000
School in Nicoya	6000
Municipal building in Nicoya	4500
Hospital in Santa Cruz	6000
Repairs to the dock of Puerto Jesús and dredging the estuary	2500
Repairs to the road from Bolsón a Santa Cruz	2500
Municipal building in Filadelfia	4500
Land surveys in the canton of Liberia	4000
Dock at the confluence of the Tempisque and Bolsón Rivers, in Carrillo	6000

Furthermore, the government was authorized "para invertir la suma necesaria... en la construcción de un puente sobre el río Tempisque, en la carretera nacional, que una los cantones de Liberia y Carrillo."[50] Newspapers spoke of a total of $47,000 (U.S. dollars).[51] Pseudonymous author Juan de Fresa mocked the use of the dollar currency in the text of the law: "Pobrecitos los colones, ya se siente por ellos vergüenza! Pero para el Guanacaste, ya que una vez se acordaron de él, bien está que haya sido en dollars.… Nunca hemos tenido fe en tales dádivas. Y la de ahora, es de tan crecida suma, que menos creemos."[52]

Further commemorative steps were decreed as well. The government ordered the emission of postal seals "relativos al Centenario que va a celebrarse y que deberán circular desde el 25 de julio al 31 de diciembre de 1924," and the church of Nicoya was

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[49] Decree no. 141 of July 28, 1923, in Víctor Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo. Centenario de la incorporación del Partido de Nicoya a Costa Rica, 1824-1924* (San José, Costa Rica: Publicación de la Secretaría de Gobernación, Imprenta María v. de Lines, 1924), 5-7.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Although the law text did not mention which currency was to be used, the document used the symbol of dollar. *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 20, 1923, 6.

[52] "Del momento que pasa: Guanacaste IV," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 24, 1923, 3.

formally declared a "reliquia nacional, que el Gobierno de la Republica deberá protejer [sic] y conservar con medidas adecuadas al efecto."[53] (Another historical relic, the old *cabildo* building where Nicoyans had proclaimed annexation in 1824, received no assistance at all, and in fact collapsed in 1925.)[54]

In spite of the conflicting sentiments of the Guanacastecan congressional deputies, the discussion surrounding the celebration of the centenary had a peaceful conclusion in Congress. Deputy Briceño ended up congratulating Aragón and calling him "el verdadero diputado guanacasteco." Briceño lamented the incident with Baltodano and expressed his desire that "ese tiquismiquis haya servido para consolidar los vínculos de unión." Deputy Zúñiga was struck by the way in which "los hombres del interior quieren bien al Guanacaste" and urged his colleagues to add to the budget in order to build another dock, at the confluence of the Tempisque and Bolsón rivers; the proposal was approved in its first debate.[55] Deputy Jiménez minimized the importance of the conflict between Briceño and Baltodano, calling it "querellas entre hermanos, que todos sabemos terminan en la mayor cordialidad, en el ambiente familiar." The once-and-future president of the Republic also proclaimed the need to "premiar la lealtad de aquel pueblo con tres días de fiestas cívicas."[56]

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[53] See the Decree no. 141 of July 28, 1923, in Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 6.

[54] In July 1925, *La Tribuna* newspaper published a transcription of a telegram from Nicoya reporting that the old *Cabildo* had fallen down. See "Se derrumbó el edificio del histórico cabildo de Nicoya. Escapó de morir el jefe político," *La Tribuna* July 7, 1925, 4. Later, on the eve of the annexation day, *Diario de Costa Rica* published the following note: "En días pasados dimos cuenta de que se había hundido el Cabildo de Nicoya, edificio antiquísimo situado frente a la plaza y considerado como reliquia histórica. Ahora se nos comunicó que dicho edificio acabó de derrumbarse ayer, con gran estrépito, causando alarma al vecindario…" See "Acabó de derrumbarse el Cabildo de Nicoya," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 18, 1925, 5.

[55] *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 20, 1923, 4.

After appropriating money for (material) public works, it was time for the moral and intellectual enrichment of province and nation. The congressmen agreed that Guanacaste was not merely a neglected, but a sadly unknown region of the Republic.

> Verdad es que los gobiernos han visto con alguna indiferencia esa región del país y había que aprovecharse la fecha histórica, para hacer algo efectivo y demostrar así el agradecimiento eterno por su desinteresado proceder. Pero a la construcción de las importantes obras de fomento, hay que unir un homenaje cultural, que perdure y haga conocer aquella acción valiosa, para que aumente la simpatía a que es acreedora.... se impone esta labor, para hacer variar la idea general que se tiene del Guanacaste, por el desconocimiento absoluto de su vida, costumbres y de su pasado histórico.[57]

In order to mitigate this lack of knowledge and appreciation, the deputies approved the elaboration of a commemorative historical book about the province, as suggested by Teacher Vega.[58] In addition to the commemorative volume, they also adopted the proposal of Deputy Briceño to celebrate the festival in February of 1924, "para aprovechar el buen tiempo y dar ocasión de que le toque hacerlo a este Gobierno, que ha visto con simpatía la ley que estamos dando."[59] Briceño preferred not to take the risk that the new government might not want to carry through on the commitments made in this session regarding the official celebration of the centenary.

Voices of Discontent

One month later, the *Diario de Costa Rica* published, in multiple parts, a column that evaluated the decisions of Congress with respect to the commemoration of the

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[56] "El Centenario del Guanacaste. El Gobierno debe disponer la publicación de un libro conmemorativo," *Diario de Costa Rica,* July 21, 1923, 3.

[57] *Diario de Costa Rica,* July 26, 1923, 4.

[58] Ibid. The book, published the following year, was Cabrera's *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*.

[59] *Diario de Costa Rica,* July 26, 1923, 4.

centenary. The author criticized the fact that the value of the slated program of public works had been expressed in dollars, and noted that the amount assigned for each project seemed too low for completion. As an example the author mentioned the repairs to the road between Bolsón and Santa Cruz, whose assigned budget of $2,500, he wrote, showed "un desconocimiento absoluto de clase de trabajo que en dicho camino hay que hacer."[60]

Nor did the efforts of deputy and candidate Jiménez have the desired effect of improving his image in Guanacaste: the attacks from his political opponents continued. According to these authors the triumph of candidate Jiménez would bring negative consequences for Guanacaste. As a member of the Partido Agrícola wrote under the pseudonym Ludolfo:

> ¿Qué sería de la provincia del Guanacaste si por desgracia llegase de nuevo a regir los destinos de la nación su antiguo enemigo Licenciado Jiménez? Recordáis la frasecita aquella que brotó de los labios de ese mismo ciudadano en el recinto congresil allá por el año 1907: 'Si queremos castigar a Nicaragua, regalémosle el Guanacaste'?[61]

During the months of the campaign in 1923, Guanacastecan opponents of the Partido Republicano used the issue of Guanacaste in the pages of *La Nueva Prensa* to continue throwing poisoned darts at Ricardo Jiménez.[62] It is clear that these attacks cannot, in and of themselves, be considered as manifestations of regionalism; rather, those Guanacastecans who were militant supporters of the opposing national parties

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[60] "Del momento que pasa," *Diario de Costa Rica,* August 24, 1923, 3.

[61] "Alerta bagaceños," *La Nueva Prensa,* August 10, 1923, 2. I have not found the possible original quote of Jiménez.

[62] See especially the issues of June 27; August 3, and 10; September 21, 24, and 26; November 3, and 23; and December 10, 1923.

utilized the image of the "Cinderella" as part of the fierce electoral struggle. These Guanacastecan agitators competed in the national press to prove which party and which candidate better served the interests of the province, they mocked their fellow provincials who followed other parties, and they praised their own. Nevertheless, the fact that regionalist arguments were used indicates that potential voters now perceived the defense of regional interests within the national political structure as both important and possible. They identified with their province and expected a better treatment for her within the national community. Apparently the Guanacastecan voting populace believed that actions of Congress and the central government could and should improve life in the province, and that the extent to which government by a given party would further provincial interests depended on the actions of their representatives. Thus, the cyclical intensification of electoral politics had a contradictory relationship with the emerging regionalism. It caused more division than unity among the disparate fractions of the province's powerful, and yet this did not invalidate the fact that the voting masses of the province believed regionalist arguments to be legitimate and important when it came time to decide how to cast their votes.

In general, the Guanacastecans who began to develop the regionalist discourse at the start of the twentieth century had received primary schooling organized by the liberal state within the province, and had gone on from there to receive secondary schooling in the nation's capital. Thus, they had been socialized in liberal ideas and nationalism, and their comprehension of the role of the state coincided with the liberal ideology of national political elites. For them, the state was obliged to organize infrastructure, public institutions, and their physical installations. These intellectuals—teachers in their

majority, although merchants and even large landowners could also be found among those who wrote about Guanacaste in the press—thought about their region and their province necessarily within the larger context of the liberal state, and within a nationalist framework. Equally, they could be described as a group of intellectuals and *petit bourgeoises* accustomed to urban life; many of them had not only come to study in San José but chosen to stay, establishing their residences in the capital or in other cities in the center of the country.[63]

These Guanacastecans promoted the commemoration of the centenary of annexation because they saw in the official celebration the opportunity to attain for Guanacaste the place that they considered she deserved within the Costa Rica nation. Meanwhile, the "fathers of the nation" (politicians of and for the center) accepted with pleasure the proposed large-scale celebration of the centenary, although probably for reasons that had more to do with immediate electoral expediency than with any real intention to work toward the long-term development of the region. The Guanacastecans seem to have been optimistic, to say the least, in trusting that the official celebration of the centenary would convert the province of Guanacaste from Cinderella to princess.

One, Two, Three Celebrations...

Nicoyans in particular were enthusiastic about the prospect of commemorating the centenary of annexation. In Nicoya, preparations for the celebration began on September

[63] For instance, Leonidas Briceño had received a scholarship from the liberal government for his secondary school studies in the Liceo de Costa Rica in San José. Briceño was a teacher, lawyer, journalist, and founder of *El Noticiero* newspaper; produced literary and political texts; was elected as deputy in the Nacional Congress for several periods; and was appointed as Vice-Secretary of Public Works during the administration of liberal president Cleto González Víquez. See *La Nueva Prensa*, August 31, 1926, 2, and *El Guanacaste,* April 10, 1936, 1. Most of the promoters of the centenary were schoolteachers, who also wrote for the newspapers.

2, 1923, when the "Nicoyan School Committee for the Centenary of Guanacaste" was formed. Congress had agreed to hold the official celebration at the start of February 1924, before the next president took office, but the Nicoyans charged their own committee with the task of preparing centenary festivities to take place from March to July 1924. The members of the committee included fifteen gentlemen, three matrons, and seven unmarried young ladies.[64] In its first meeting, the committee discussed the plan for celebration presented by Higinio Vega, elected a Board of Directors, and defined the committee's *vocales* (active members) to include all other teachers in the canton.[65] From the beginning, the Nicoyan teachers considered that the centenary should be above all a *fiesta escolar*, structured around active participation by schoolchildren, even though the Decree no. 141 of July 1923 had not ordered this in an explicit way.[66] Probably they already had experience in organizing *fiestas escolares* for Independence Day.[67] But now, for the first time it would be a matter of commemorating throughout the nation a glorious historical event whose protagonists had been Nicoyans.

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[64] The *señores* were: Arturo Solano, Higinio Vega, Felipe Díaz, Juan Guevara, Enrique Sánchez, Rafael Rojas, Juan Gutiérrez, Marco A. Cruz, Virgilio Chavarría, Alejandro Juárez, José Domingo Cárdenas, Atiliano Guadamuz, Constantino Orozco, Víctor Hugo González, and Ramón Arias; the *señoras*, Clara de Ordóñez, Ursulina de Contreras, and Carlota Arnáez, and the *señoritas*, Chepita Barquero, Celestina Enríquez, Clemencia Briceño, Isabel Cárdenas, Benigna Mora, Rosario Hidalgo, and Anita Araya.

[65] As Board members were elected Higinio Vega, Felipe Díaz, José D. Cárdenas, Recaredo Briceño Arauz, and as substitute members, Isabel Cárdenas Cubillo, Clemencia Briceño Cárdenas, and Marco A. Cruz. See "Se inician en Guanacaste los trabajos del Centenario. Fue electo el Comité Escolar Nicoyano. (Envío del Corresponsal)." *Diario de Costa Rica*, September 4, 1923, 9.

[66] That government order was given on July 4, 1924, only few days befote the celebration, and it stated that "el proximo 25 de julio quede declarado día de fiesta nacional que habrá de celebrarse por todos los establecimientos de educación, con actos propios del primer centenario que se conmemora." See the Decree no. 26 of July 4, 1924, in Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 455-456.

[67] On the importance of patriotic celebrations in the school system in Costa Rica, see David Díaz Arias, *Rituales cívicos, memoria, identidad nacional y poder. La fiesta de la independencia en Cos a Rica, 1821-1921* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, forthcoming).

Although the national press dedicated most of January and February to the electoral campaign, the papers also published small notes from time to time about the public works that were being carried out in some localities of Guanacaste as a result of the "ley del centenario." Because of delays in the execution of the projects, in July 1924 President Jiménez signed an extension of *Ley 141*, which postponed the inauguration of the public works projects to February 2 of the following year.[68] The declaration of July 25, 1924 as a national holiday still stood. It was not the three days of national rejoicing that Deputy Jiménez had originally proposed, but the centenary without doubt received significant attention from the rest of society. Even so, and in spite of the official declaration of the day as a national commemoration, to be observed in all public schools, it is difficult to affirm that the centenary of the annexation of Guanacaste was indeed celebrated in schools throughout the country. From the province of Guanacaste, though, and especially from Nicoya, chronicles and notes were indeed received regarding the preparation and execution of the centenary festivities.

In Nicoya, the "Junta del Centenario de Nicoya" was formed in June of 1924. The *Diario de Costa Rica* mentioned that the installation of this board was approved by the executive branch: thus, it had official standing.[69] We do not know what happened to the "Nicoyan School Committee for the Centenary of Guanacaste" that had been formed

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[68] The "whereas" of the extension of Law no. 141 read: "que las obras que dicha ley ordena hacer no estarán terminadas para la fecha en que se dispuso la inauguración de ellas; Que aun cuando lo estuvieran, la fecha en que habría de celebrarse el magno acontecimiento que esa ley dispone festejar cae en época excesivamente lluviosa lo cual imposibilitaría la mayor concurrencia especialmente de altos funcionarios, como se desea, a los mencionados actos." Delays in the works and the rainy season made the government postpone the official celebration to February 2, 1925. See Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 455-456.

[69] The members of this board were Nicolás Baltodano Torres, Arturo Solano Monge, Francisco Carrillo Obando, Francisco Cubillo, Francisco Armijo Parra y Jesús Guerrero. *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 5, 1924, 9. Véase también, *La Nueva Prensa*, July 4, 1924, 4.

the previous year. What is clear is that, congressional intentions notwithstanding, neither Nicoya nor any other town celebrated the centenary before the date that had been historically considered the date of annexation, July 25.[70] Furthermore, and especially in Liberia, the centenary was combined with the traditional yearly *fiestas* of Santiago. In Liberia the centenary was celebrated in the Escuela de Liberia, where the municipal band played "regional music" and where there was also a "recitation on a regional theme."[71] No precise information is available as to exactly what "regional" meant in this context, but what is important is that the term was already assumed to be significant to and comprehensible by the nation's reading public. Most likely the music included the *punto guanacasteco* and other popular rhythms, perhaps played on the marimba and other band instruments.[72] In Liberia, the traditional *fiestas* of Santiago, which were folded into the celebration of the centenary of annexation, consisted of "carreras de caballos de las haciendas cercanas y... otras diversiones de menor importancia."[73]

In Sardinal the centenary was celebrated on July 25, when, after "un homenaje de la escuela," a centenary ball was held.[74] In Filadelfia the celebration was carried out on July 26, when "...declaróse cabildo abierto y el pueblo en compañía de los niños juraron

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[70] "Celebrando el centenario de Guanacaste en Sardinal," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 1, 1924, 7; "El baile del centenario en Sardinal," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 6, 1924, 7; "El Centenario de Nicoya celebrado en Filadelfia," *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 29, 1924, 7; "De Filadelfia," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 13, 1924, 7.

[71] *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 2, 1924, 7. Actually, another ball in Liberia a couple of weeks before the centenary received much more attention in the press that the centenary celebrations. See "Crónica del gran baile social de Liberia," *El Diario de Costa Rica*, July 2, 1924, 7.

[72] On the role of Guanacastecan regional music in Costa Rican national identity, see María Clara Vargas Cullell, *De las fanfarrias a las salas de concierto: música en Costa Rica, 1840-1940* (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica; Asociación Pro-Historia Centroamericana, 2004), 234-248.

[73] *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 2, 1924, 7.

[74] *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 1, 1924, 7 and August 6, 1924, 7.

la fidelidad a Costa Rica, en tanto que flotaba como orgulloso de aquel hermoso acto, nuestro pabellón tricolor y se oían los acordes de nuestro glorioso Himno Nacional."[75] Evidently, the celebration still represented a renewal of vows between the towns of Guanacaste and the nation, even as the *fiesta* became confused with the festivities of Santiago the Apostle. Regarding the celebrations in Filadelfia, the correspondent for the *Diario de Costa Rica* had this to say:

> La simpática fiesta conmemorativa del centenario ha dejado muy gratos recuerdos. La manera mejor de celebrar esa fecha, la manera mejor de expresar nuestro acendrado amor a Costa Rica era unidos, como aquellos dignos antecesores: así fue. Filadelfia, la ribereña, desplegó sus galas para este lugar, Santiago Apostol y el Centenario.[76]

The love of country Guanacastecans expressed rivaled the devotion they felt for Santiago Apostle. Perhaps only the Nicoyans considered it more important to venerate their nation than their saint, since, without even mentioning the Apostle, they dedicated themselves to celebrating their nationality from six o'clock on the evening of July 24—when "los edificios públicos, establecimientos y casas particulares" were illuminated—until the night of the following day. On the 24th they danced until midnight, at which time twenty-one shells were fired and the town bells were rung to salute the arrival of the 25th. At dawn, the *fiesta* resumed just before the first rays of the sun, with a reveille played by the municipal band. At 9 a.m., a *fiesta escolar* was held with the attendance of "las autoridades, corporaciones y vecinos." At noon and during the afternoon, there were *carreras de cintas* (ribbon races) and horse races, and at night, a "velada escolar."[77]

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[75] *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 29, 1924, 7.

[76] *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 13, 1924, 7.

The *Diario de Costa Rica* celebrated the centenary on July 25 with the publication of various special pages dedicated to the historical events of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya and to the related *sesión solemne* (formal observance) in Congress. The *Diario* reprinted the December 1825 decree of the Congreso Federal de Centroamérica declaring the separation of the Partido de Nicoya from Nicaragua, and other historical documents.[78] There was a photo of the church of Nicoya and another of the *Cabildo* Municipal. A photo of an archaeological piece (a clay whistle) from the National Museum was published, as well as a chronicle about the Matarrita family, Juan José Matarrita in particular, who had collected pieces extracted from the indigenous cemeteries of the peninsula of Nicoya. According to the column, Matarrita had later donated his collection to Bishop Thiel. Clearly, the ancient past of Nicoya and its material traces were valuable elements for the nation.[79] Information about "Nicoya Today" and "important figures" of the province was also published, alongside other social notes.[80]

The *Diario de Costa Rica* gave information about the congressional solemn session and published the congratulations from Congress to the Guanacastecan municipalities along with the discussion that had preceded said official document. The discussion seemed much like that of the previous year over how to distribute the public

[77] All this was to take place according to the program of the celebrations published in *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 25, 1924, 11.

[78] Nicoyans had declared annexation to Costa Rica in July 25, 1824, but the Congreso Federal did not approve it until December 9, 1825, ratifying the decision in March 1826.

[79] On the role of archaeology in the construction of national identity, see Francisco Corrales Ulloa, "El pasado negado: la arqueología y la construcción de la nacionalidad costarricense," *Vínculos* (Costa Rica) 24 (1999): 1-26.

[80] *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 25, 1924, 3.

works spending among Guanacastecan municipalities. Now they quarreled over which of the municipalities merited the congratulations of the "Poder Supremo." Deputy Briceño proposed that the official congratulations be for municipalities of Nicoya and Santa Cruz, while Deputy Baltodano wanted to add Liberia and Carrillo to the list. The official communication published in the *Diario de Costa Rica* ended up congratulating all the municipalities of Guanacaste.[81] Briceño's arguments that only those municipalities that had first declared annexation in July 1824 deserved congratulation did not carry the day.[82]

The heated debates between the Guanacastecan deputies in Congress in 1923 and 1924 reveal that not only did national electioneering tend to generate contradictory impacts on the incipient Guanacastecan regionalism, but the very celebration of the annexation of the province to the nation could unleash rivalries and localisms among Guanacastecan elites. One hundred years into membership in the Costa Rican state, local identifications in Guanacaste seem to have been notably stronger than regional unity.

What did non-Guanacastecan intellectuals think about Guanacaste and the centenary? How did they see the role and value of Guanacaste within the nation? These questions, of such concern to Guanacastecan intellectuals, little troubled other Costa Rican thinkers in the 1920s. Yet a few non-Guanacastecans did reflect on the topic.[83] A

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[81] Ibid., 2.

[82] *Diario de Costa Rica*, July 27, 1924, 7.

[83] Rubén Hernández wrote in *La Prensa* of July 25, 1924: "Y Costa Rica se siente orgullosa de tanta grandeza y por eso festeja hoy con pompa el primer centenario de ser Nicoya, esa rica joya indiana, su protegida, su hija amable y gentil." Quoted by Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 471. *La Tribuna* expressed the following: "…es necesario no dejar pasar, no cien años, ni diez más siquiera, sin que hayamos construído un ferrocarril en aquellas ricas regiones, sin que hayamos intensificado nuestro comercio con aquellos cantones feraces, sin que hayamos dotado a aquellas ciudades florecientes de todos

schoolteacher and engineer named José Fabio Garnier[84] published a small play entitled "Las siete provincias" (The Seven Provinces), which was performed in the Escuela Normal and suggested that the province of Guanacaste was about to be transformed from Cinderella to princess—or, at least, that such a fate would be righteous and just. The play was structured as a dialogue between personages who represented the seven provinces of Costa Rica. At the beginning, the six were boasting their enchanting contributions to the nation, whereas the seventh, Guanacaste was silent. Disturbed by her silence the six began to interrogate her, wanting to know why she did not say anything: if it was because the seventh one did not feel anything, or because she really did not have anything to be proud of, anything to offer to the nation. Guanacaste answered them, "You are right when you affirm that I am Cinderella, but you are mistaken when you affirm that my brown soul does not burn with the fire of sacred love for Costa Rica." Guanacaste then convinced her sisters that she was, in fact, most beautiful and fervent lover of the Fatherland of all of them. The others admitted that they had never wanted to see or to know Guanacaste in the past, but that they now realized that their seventh sister was "because of her purer customs" the most Costa Rican of all.[85]

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los progresos necesarios, sin que hayamos borrado toda diferencia que pueda existir entre la cultura y el bienestar nuestro y el de la provincia espontáneamente costarricense, es decir, más costarricense que las que por situación geográfica tenían que integrar la República..." "El centenario de hoy," *La Tribuna* July 25, 1924, in Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 473-474. *El Viajero*, edited in Puntarenas, referred to annexation in the following words: "Fue aquel un minuto de oro, un movimiento espontáneo de sus moradores, el que les decidió en el año de gracia de 1824, a formar parte integrante de un pueblo que por afinidades etnográficas, de religión, lengua y costumbres, tiene como los guanacastecos, amor a las bendiciones de la paz, del trabajo y el progreso en todas sus manifestaciones." Ibid., 481.

[84] "José Fabio Garnier." *Pandemonium* 8, no. 86, February 1, 1913, 166-167. See also *Páginas Ilustradas* 3, no. 115, October 7, 1906, 1850.

[85] "Las siete provincias. Diálogo puesto en escena en la Escuela Normal," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 16, 1924, 2.

The performance of the play in the Escuela Normal and its publication in *Diario de Costa Rica* suggests that the representation of Guanacaste as the sister unjustly marginalized and forgotten—Cinderella—was widely diffused and easily comprehensible to Costa Ricans in the Central Highlands in the 1920s. This image changed in following decade, when the Guanacastecan regionalist project generated a belligerent political party that competed in the national electoral arena. But at the time of the commemoration of the centenary of annexation, the idea of Guanacastecan regionalism as a contestatory political force worried neither the national authorities nor the rest of the society. "The Seven Provinces" also demonstrated that another representation of Guanacaste had been born, that of the province with the most authentic culture in Costa Rica. As the next chapter will discuss in detail, this representation of Guanacaste as the cradle of the only authentic (the only *nationalizable*) popular culture in Costa Rica—first enunciated by a non-Guanacastecan intellectual—would become fundamental for the construction of the regionalist movement after 1935 and for the remodeling of national symbols after 1950.

The central government had transferred the official celebration of the centenary to February of 1925, to be able to have time enough to complete the official "gift" and so that high-ranking government officials could participate in the celebration.[86] How did the province prepare to commemorate the centenary once again, in its final, and first official, incarnation? According to newspapers, there was not much enthusiasm. Two weeks before the decreed celebration, the correspondent of *La Nueva Prensa* in Nicoya was not convinced that anything was going to happen in his town:

[86] Law no. 26 of July 4, 1924, in Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, 455-456.

> Posiblemente las fiestas del Centenario han pasado al catálogo de las idealidades amables, porque a estas horas no hay más que preparativos de lengua. La comisión es una figura decorativa que mejor se hallaría en un portal.[87]

At least the stamps dedicated to the centenary had been circulating, along with the stamps dedicated to Simón Bolivar, and the period of their circulation was extended to the rest of the year of 1925.[88] There also were good events in the cultural field, as the commemorative book of Víctor Cabrera was published at the end of year 1924, receiving positive comments in the national press.[89]

The official commemoration of the centenary was finally carried out in Nicoya in the first days of February 1925. Newspaper notices regarding the celebration were conspicuously inconspicuous, small notes included as if only to fill up empty space in the columns. Congress and the central government sent their representatives to Nicoya: three Guanacastecan deputies—Leonidas Briceño, Adriano Urbina and Pablo Rodriguez—and Secretary of Public Works Carlos Volio. President Jiménez excused himself.[90] Finally,

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[87] *La Nueva Prensa*, January 14, 1925, 6 and January 23, 1925, 3.

[88] "Las estampillas de Bolívar y Nicoya y los sobre sellados," *La Nueva Prensa*, 22/1/1925, p. 4.

[89] See Cabrera, *Guanacaste: libro conmemorativo*, and "D. Luis Dobles Segreda y el libro 'Guanacaste'," *La Nueva Prensa*, January 24, 1925, 5; "Sobre el Libro 'Guanacaste'," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 7, 1925, 5 y *La Opinión*, February 11, 1925, 2. Cabrera's book was a compilation of official information and documents on Guanacaste from diverse perspectives, including geography, history, politics, and economics. When Cabrera discussed mining in Guanacaste he painted a happy scene, praising the mine company and rejecting complaints of water pollution as malicious and unrealistic, and transcribing, as a proof, an official report on the mining zone, which was an extremely positive evaluation of the mine company's actions in the zone. Accusations, however, continued in the press. For example, the *Diario de Costa Rica* published a letter of the inhabitants of Cañas demanding the president penalize the company for the continuous pollution of drinking water in Cañas. See Emilio Alpízar, "Los vecinos de Cañas y el envenenamiento de las aguas," *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 4, 1925.

[90] "Representación Nacional en las fiestas centenarias de Nicoya," *La Prensa*, January 28, 1925, 1; "Regresaron de Nicoya los señores Diputados," *La Prensa*, February 5, 1925, 3; "Para las fiestas de Nicoya," *La Nueva Prensa*, January 30, 1925, 5; "Mañana empiezan en Nicoya las fiestas conmemorativas," *La Opinión*, February 1, 1925, 1; "Fiestas del centenario," *El Heraldo*, January 30, 1925,

centennial Cinderella received her birthday gift, although there were some doubts whether the package had arrived whole. One of the contents generating critique was the supposed repair of the road from Santa Cruz to Ballena. The contract had been awarded through a public bidding process, but the quality of the work did not satisfy spectators. "Rellenar unos cuantos baches y hacer unos pocos metros de calzada no es arreglar una carretera, que es arteria principal de nuestro comercio," pseudonymous Luis Diego said in *La Nueva Prensa*.[91]

Nicoyans received and entertained national and provincial authorities in the middle of a scandal that occupied much more space in the press than the centenary events: allegations of embezzlement in the municipal government of Nicoya. According to newspapers, the treasurer had used some financial maneuvers that generated suspicions among high-level national authorities.[92] The celebration of the centenary found space in the pages of the newspapers only after the problem of municipal treasury had been clarified. Now the newspapers published articles and letters commenting on the impact of the passed centenary on the relationship between the central government and the

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4. *La Nueva Prensa* wrote that Adriano Urbina represented the municipality of Liberia in Nicoya. "Salio la Comisión de las Fiestas del Centenario de Nicoya," *La Nueva Prensa*, January 31, 1925, 4.

[91] "To fill up a few pockets and to make few meters of road is not to fix a highway, the main artery of our commerce." The author was convinced that the government bonds for road building were not known in Guanacaste. "De Santa Cruz, Guanacaste," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 6, 1925, 7.

[92] "Se descubren anormalidades en el manejo de los fondos de la Municipalidad de Nicoya," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 3, 1925, 1; "Nuevos detalles sobre el desfalco en la Tesorería Municipal de Nicoya," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 4, 1925, 1; "Mas detalles sobre el desfalco de Nicoya," *La Opinión*, February 6, 1925, 1; "Se reunió antenoche la Municipalidad de Nicoya," *La Opinión*, February 11, 1925, 1; "Acerca del desfalco de la Tesorería Municipal de Nicoya," *La Tribuna*, February 7, 1925, 3; "Los chanchullos municipales de Nicoya," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 10, 1925, 8; "Se arregló el asunto de la Tesorería de Nicoya," *La Tribuna*, February 11, 1925, 1; "Impresiones de un delegado oficial que regresa del Guanacaste," *La Tribuna*, February 18, 1925, 2; "Habla el Sr. Tesorero Municipal de Nicoya: aclaración de una falsedad," *La Nueva Prensa*, February 25, 1925, 6; "Habla el Tesorero Municipal de Nicoya," *La Tribuna*, March 3, 1925, 6; "Una aclaración al Tesorero Municipal de Nicoya," *La Tribuna*, March 5, 1925, 2.

province of Guanacaste. An author signing himself EOLO complained bitterly about the ways in which the government had decided to ignore the popular will of Nicoyans and impose the celebration of the centenary long after town of Nicoya had already celebrated.

> Se ha celebrado el Centenario de la Anexión de Nicoya y sus resultados han sido pálidos en la vida guanacasteca. El año pasado, el 25 de julio, la Escuela de este centro y todas las del circuito de Nicoya lo celebraron brillantemente, con paradas escolares, procesiones cívicas, asambleas del pueblo, veladas, juegos deportivos, etc.; y no se le tomo en cuenta.[93]

Lamenting the governmental decision to transfer commemoration of the centenary to February 1925, EOLO also reproached the fact that attendance by national government figures in the celebration had been so insignificant and without positive consequences.[94] Still harsher was the reaction of Nicoyan Juan Guevara in *La Nueva Prensa*. Guevara was annoyed by the fact that the official celebration in Nicoya ended up being such a humble event, and that there were absolutely no celebration in the rest of the country. From Guevara's perspective, the performance of people of Nicoya on the day of the celebration was equally inadequate:

> Una lujosa representación de los altos poderes puso sus plantas en donde se esperaba animación, alegría y comprensión de la trascendencia del acto, para hallar una pasmosa frialdad interrumpida de cuando en vez por el grito destemplado de los ebrios o el barullo de la regional marimba.[95]

The author evidently did not appreciate the *regional music* nor consider marimba solemn enough to accompany an act of official commemoration.

However, what displeased Guevara most was the fact that despite Congress's declaration of a national celebration, the centenary was observed only in Nicoya—and

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[93] "Nicoya y su Centenario," *La Nueva Prensa,* February 17, 1925, 4.

[94] Ibid. See also *La Nueva Prensa,* February 9, 1925, 4.

[95] "La voz de un nicoyano. Por la provincia de Guanacaste," *La Nueva Prensa,* March 2, 1925, 6.

that months after the town had held the true celebration. The official commemoration, then, ended up being an official insult towards the province and its inhabitants. According to Guevara:

> El olvido, el menosprecio en que vivimos y se nos relega cada vez más, engendra en nuestras almas sentimientos de protesta que no tardarán en cristalizarse en hechos reales para reclamar nuestros derechos a merced de nuestros malquerientes.... Conste mi protesta y mientras tanto pido a los que nos explotan, que si no nos dan, que no nos quiten, que nosotros podremos seguir viviendo sin tutelajes bochornosos porque tenemos vida propia y gozamos de independencia espiritual para llevar a término nuestros asuntos y colocarnos a un nivel que nos niegan ingratamente los que solamente miran que Costa Rica es CARTAGO y SAN JOSÉ.[96]

Without a doubt, some Nicoyans—important local figures—felt deeply disappointed by the behavior of the central government around the commemoration of the centenary of the act of the annexation. These were not the voices of a few malcontents: authors widely known even outside Guanacaste like the teacher Pánfilo Vidaurre and Deputy Francisco Faerron participated in the retroactive public debate over the meaning of the centenary for Nicoya and the province of Guanacaste. In one public letter to Faerron, Vidaurre wrote about the scorn with which the governments had always watched Guanacastecans and urged, "we must take advantage of this lesson to prepare us for the future."[97]

Conclusion

During the early twentieth century, Guanacastecan publicists began to elaborate regionalist ideas in the provincial and national press, with the purpose of creating unity

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[96] Ibid. Interestingly, in 1938, Juan Guevara would argue against the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca and its electoral candidate Francisco Vargas Vargas. See *El Guanacaste*, January 23, 1938, 3.

[97] "Contestación al Licdo. Faerron," *La Nueva Prensa*, March 12, 1925, 7.

and a sense of belonging among the inhabitants of the province. Guanacastecans discussed the problems of lack of modernization and progress in Guanacaste and tended to blame the national state for the backwardness of the province. The central preoccupation of the Guanacastecan publicists was the creation of regional consciousness; however, it was not an easy task, as Guanacastecans perceived that there were historical rivalries between the different localities and people. This difficulty was accompanied by that of the affiliation of Guanacastecans to national political parties, which generated accusations and discord among Guanacastecan leaders and their followers during political campaigns. The commemoration of the centenary of the annexation of the Partido de Nicoya to Costa Rica did not manage to unite Guanacastecans. Instead, it became a bitter disappointment for the promoters of regionalism, who did not manage to modify the historical relation between the national state and the province, which they considered humiliating. Frustration caused by the centenary's outcome produced critical reflection on the treatment of the province by the central government. It was partly the bitterness caused by this experience that drove a group of intellectuals and Guanacastecan political activists to work more systematically for a regional movement and political organization in the following decade.

Chapter Four

Regional Identity and Political Organization, 1935-1939

> "Entonces no seremos ya La Cenicienta que llora: seremos la Bella Durmiente que sonríe en su despertar vivificador."[1]

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the ideas of region and the images of social relations in that imagined region that were publicized by the organizers of the regionalist movement in the second half of the 1930s. Rather than a well-structured and coherent discourse, what they offered was a messy array of often-conflicting ideas. The common feature of the different authors' positions, however, was a focus on the importance of regional unity beyond class lines: a remarkable discursive achievement in a region with the most asymmetrical property and class structures in the country. Even those who recognized the reality of exploitation employed a language of class reconciliation when trying to find solutions for the impoverished living conditions of the lower classes in the province. Would it be more accurate to refer to this movement as "provincialist" rather than "regionalist," given its promoters' constant emphasis of the position of the *province* of Guanacaste *vis à vis* the rest of the nation? I choose to employ the term regionalism instead, first, because the promoters of this provincialism labeled their political movement regionalism, and, second, because this movement converted Guanacaste into a *region* that became "real" in the imagination of the promoters of regionalism, and in the minds of the rest of the society as well.

[1] "Hechos y comentarios: la Bella Durmiente," *El Guanacaste,* September 8, 1936, 4.

Historians and other social scientists have offered varying definitions of regionalism, none of which correspond neatly to what Guanacastecan activists meant when they spoke of "*regionalismo*" in the 1930s. Sociologists and political scientists usually use the term regionalism to refer to movements or policies that pursue the "regionalization" of public administration: either in the form of central-state planning that takes into account sub-national regional particularities and resources, or in the form of the decentralization of state structure itself.[2] There are also studies that use the term regionalism to refer to a particular pattern of political behavior—not necessarily a movement or organization—in a sub-national territory.[3] Others use the label regionalism specifically for those organizations or movements that pursue regional interests in

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[2] P.J.O. Self, "Regionalism (Political Science)," *A Dictionary of the Social Sciences*, edited by Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, compiled under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (USA: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), 583. Others have used region and regionalism as exchangeable concepts. See Harry E. Moore, "Regionalism (Sociology)," Ibid., 585. In the 1920s and 1930s, scholars and administrators in the United States were interested in studying and defining "regionalism" as a tool of national or federal planning, trying to find balance between the different regions or states within the nation. In this sense, regionalism was considered as "the opposite of its most common interpretation, namely, localism, sectionalism, or provincialism," and region was understood simply as "a geographic unit with limits and bounds." See Howard Washington Odum and Harry E. Moore, *American Regionalism: A Cultural-Historical Approach to National Integration* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1938), 14.

[3] A couple of decades ago, William Brustein explained that "the persistence of distinctive regional political behavior in France" was "based upon the existence of discrete regional modes of production." "These regional social structures produce specific constellations of interests among cultivators. These interests, in turn, result in discrete patterns of aggregate political behavior." William Brustein, *The Social Origins of Political Regionalism: France, 1849-1981* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1988), 3, 9. Brustein's way to analyze a "distinctive regional political behavior" [9] might have been suitable, but his choice to reduce the concept of regionalism to particular patterns of certain region's inhabitants' political behavior on the national election polls was less adequate. The fact that inhabitants of a certain region or province vote similarly does not necessarily reveal a phenomenon of regionalism. Brustein criticized other scholars' explanations because, according to him, they assumed that "individuals' attitudes are shaped more by the knowledge of an event that occurred long before they were born than by their current circumstances," finding that argument "an afterthought and… not supported with evidence." Brustein preferred studying the immediate economic interests produced by particular historical circumstances to explain the political behavior of the voters in a region. Ibid., 15. Perhaps the knowledge of the past does not explain political behavior, but there is no doubt that the past is frequently used to legitimate political action and movements, or regional identity building, as in the case of Guanacaste. The past was constantly present in the region imagined and created by the Guanacastecan intellectuals; it was a crucial element used to transform minds and to provoke political action in the 1930s.

opposition to those of the national state, by denouncing discrimination and oppression by the central government, or struggling against the central government for autonomy or independence.[4] Guanacastecan regionalism does not fit easily into any of these schema. Guanacastecan regionalists never demanded autonomy or independence; to the contrary, they demanded that the state more effectively incorporate them into the nation. Meanwhile, "Guanacastecan identity" ended up playing a vital role in the reinvigoration of national symbols that accompanied the seizure of central-state power by new socio-political forces following a short civil war in 1948.

In this chapter, I analyze the configuration of Guanacastecan regionalism as a political movement that called for the defense of the common interests—imagined or real—of a unified region—more imagined than real—in the 1930s. Visions of popular culture and lower-class lives had a key function in this ideological and discursive creation. I will begin by assessing the economic and social context of the advent of the organized movement, and then analyze its ideological content—the elements from which publicists constructed a particular regional identity—and the language employed by the movement's leaders. Finally I will discuss the language used by party leader Francisco Vargas Vargas in the short-lived regionalist political party's national electoral campaign.

Land Conflict, Nationalism, and Crisis

In the first decades of the twentieth century Guanacaste witnessed a growing social conflict over landownership.[5] The Costa Rican state had been intervening in

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[4] Some dictionaries of social sciences offer this kind of definition of regionalism. See, for example, Enzo Mingione, "Regionalism," *The Blackwell Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Social Thought*, ed. William Outhwaite and Tom Bottomore (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 550-551.

conflictive situations and implementing non-systematic agrarian reform policies since 1900.[6] Land conflicts between landlords and peasants outside the coffee-growing areas increased particularly in the early 1920s.[7] The Costa Rican government sometimes tried to solve conflicts by approving laws to expropriate private lands and distribute them to the peasants who had been occupying and cultivating them.[8] Many of those laws, however, were not executed or were only partially executed, often meaning that the government purchased the land from the landowner but the peasants did not receive the land, or if they received the land, did not receive title. When Guanacastecan politicians

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[5] According to Gudmundson, the struggle over lands increased in the early twentieth century due to the process of formal land titling, which tended to increase the area of the old haciendas. The great landowners declared that more lands had actually been included in their properties from the colonial times than those appearing in the original titles. Lowell Gudmundson, *Hacendados, políticos y precaristas: la ganadería y el latifundismo guanacasteco 1800-1950* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica, 1983), 85. See also Gudmundson, "Peasant movements and the Transition to Agrarian Capitalism: 1880-1935," *Peasant Studies* 10, no. 3 (1983): 145-162, and Marc Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio: the Large Estates of Northwestern Costa Rica since the Late Nineteenth Century* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992).

[6] Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 149, 168-169, 175.

[7] Struggles over land ownership in Costa Rica in the 1920s and 1930s happened in non-coffee-producing areas. The agrarian structure had already consolidated in the coffee areas by the 1920s, and the conflicts there occurred mainly between coffee producers and processors. Mario Samper Kutschbach, "In Difficult Times: Colombian and Costa Rican Coffee Growers from Prosperity to Crisis, 1920-1936," in *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America* edited by William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson and Mario Samper Kutschbach (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 173-175. See also, Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "La ideología de los pequeños y medianos productores cafetaleros cafetaleros costarricenses (1900-1961)," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 16 (1987): 137-159; and "Patrones del conflicto social en la economía cafetalera costarricense (1900-1948)," *Revista de Ciencias Sociales* (Costa Rica) 31 (1986): 113-122. The main land conflicts in Guanacaste in the 1920s took place in the mining community of Abangares, where not only peasants but also mine workers participated in struggle, and the conflict with the foreign mining company reached levels similar to a guerilla fight. See Vladimir de la Cruz, *Las luchas sociales en Costa Rica, 1870-1930* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Costa Rica – Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 1980), 119-145. For an analysis of the social and racial dynamics of the Abangares conflicts see Aviva Chomsky, "Laborers and Smallholders in Costa Rica's Mining Communities, 1900-1940, in *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: the Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean*, edited by Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 169-195.

[8] Gudmundson, *Hacendados, politicos y precaristas*, 85; Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 170. In 1932 the Costa Rican government began to implement protectionist taxes on cattle imports, which led to import substitution and the consolidation of the economic and political power of the cattle ranchers. Ibid., 115.

called in Congress for the expropriation of lands, usually self-interests lay behind their apparently altruistic claims.[9] Marc Edelman has argued that the Costa Rican state's early interest in agrarian reform was due more to the desire to maintain social peace than to some kind of reformist project on the part of power holders. But he also has pointed out that certain Central Highland elites did have anti-*latifundio* sentiments, making some agrarian reform measures possible in Congress as early as the first decade of the twentieth century.[10] Certainly both metropolitan and regionalist newspapers published anti- *latifundio* arguments beginning in the early twentieth century.

By the 1930s, nationalism had achieved hegemony in practically all the sectors of Costa Rican society, including the working class.[11] As seen earlier, nationalism was the ideological matrix of the first regionalist writings, which considered regionalism to be a sub-category of nationalist patriotism.[12] Not only regionalists but all Guanacastecans—elite and subaltern—were aware of the power of nationalist discourse in the country's political matters, and used it as a legitimizing tool in social conflicts within the province. As Marc Edelman has shown, both landowners and peasants used nationalist arguments to defend their interests in conflicts over land in Guanacaste. The landowners contended that the "outlaws" and "parasites"—the rural poor occupying lands without titles and making use of the lands and natural resources—were not Costa Ricans, while the

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[9] See for example the cases of Mayorga Rivas and Baltodano, ibid. 171-174.

[10] Ibid., 175.

[11] Víctor Hugo Acuña Ortega, "Nación y clase obrera en Centroamérica durante la época liberal (1870-1930)," in *El paso del cometa: estado, política social, y culturas populares en Costa Rica, 1800-1950,* edited by Iván Molina and Steven Palmer (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Porvenir – Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies, 1994).

[12] See Chapter 3.

peasants emphasized the foreign origin of the landowner they opposed, when they could.[13] The large landowners demanded that the state protect their class interests against "foreign" subaltern invasion, and the peasants expected the national state to defend them against the voracity of foreign *latifundistas*. For both groups, rightful land ownership was tied to what was thought to be the citizen's right to a piece of national territory. The hegemony of nationalist discourse made regional identity-making happen in a particular way: as a complementing and reinforcing element of national identity, in the context of contradictory claims about the local economic implications of national political rights.

The Guanacastecan regionalist organization emerged at the same time that social peace was unraveling in Guanacaste. As a consequence of the worldwide economic crisis, Costa Rican exports decreased from 18 million to 8 million dollars between 1929 and 1932.[14] In response, Guanacastecan *hacendados* successfully imposed increased levels of exploitation through wage cuts and worsening working conditions, and the lower classes' situation began to deteriorate in the mid 1930s. If in the 1920s and early 1930s the daily wages of the Guanacaste hacienda workers had been higher than those of workers in coffee fields in the center of the country, by the mid 1930s the wages of hacienda *peones* began to fall rapidly.[15] Instead of scarcity there was now an abundance of labor on the haciendas, and as wages dropped and conditions worsened, more and

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[13] The struggling peasants received moral support from the nationalist and anti-latifundist elites of the Central Highlands. Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 151, 157.

[14] Iván Molina Jiménez and Steven Paul Palmer, *Costa Rica, 1930-1996: historia de una sociedad* (San José: Porvenir, 1997), 9.

[15] Edelman, *The Logic of the Latifundio*, 113, 116.

more Guanacastecans sought work outside the province instead.[16] As a consequence of the crisis, in addition to the already ongoing land conflict between peasants and *latifundistas,* hacienda laborers began to struggle for higher wages and better working conditions.

Regional Identity and Political Organization

Coinciding with the growing levels of exploitation in the Guanacastecan cattle economy in the mid 1930s, a group of Guanacastecan middle-class intellectuals and politicians began to work systematically to create a regionalist political movement and a regional identity. They imagined Guanacaste as a unique region and a unified community with a particular culture and history. The creation of Guanacastecan cultural identity was intimately tied to political interests and programs, and therefore the process must be analyzed in connection with economy and politics.

In August 1934, Guanacastecan residents in the capital city San José founded the "La Casa de Guanacaste" society, with the purpose of "improving cultural and material life" in Guanacaste by informing and educating Guanacastecans and by making proposals to the governmental and state institutions concerning official policies towards the province.[17] By January 1935, when the newspaper *El Guanacaste*—the official voice of

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[16] Ibid., 117. According to Carlos Dávila, around 26,000 Guanacastecans emigrated in the 1930s. Carlos Dávila Cubero, ¡*Viva Vargas! Historia del Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca* (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Guayacán, 1987), 33, 131. The cruel experiences of Guanacastecan emigrants in Costa Rica's southern Pacific banana zone is depicted in the regionalist novel by Ramírez Saizar, *La venganza de Nandayure* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial "La Nación," 1950). According to Carlos Calvo Gamboa, the banana plantations negatively affected the production of grains in Guanacaste, Puntarenas, and the southern Pacific coast, as the plantations attract labor force from the traditional farming zones to the plantations, which led to a crisis of subsistence production and importation of grains by the state. The outbreak of the World War in 1939 aggravated the shortage of the subsistence products. See Carlos Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época* (San José, Costa Rica: EUNED, 1982), 74.

La Casa de Guanacaste—began to circulate, the leaders of La Casa published a report of activities so far. These included activities supporting the arts and culture of the region; encouraging Guanacastecan farmers to introduce new crops; discussing different proposed laws concerning the province's economy and agrarian problems; promoting works of urbanism in Guanacaste; creating local chapters of La Casa; and helping to sponsor a film project on Guanacaste; among others.[18]

La Casa became a crucial tool for the creation of the community of regionalist promoters and for the elaboration of regionalist discourse and regional identity. Liborio Flores, one of the chief editors of *El Guanacaste*, called the activists of La Casa "abnegados hijos de la *pampa* residentes en San José," who were carrying out an arduous, patriotic, and unselfish task on behalf of their "remote homeland" (*tierruca lejana*). Flores invited all Guanacastecans in San José to visit La Casa, "the home of all Guanacastecans," with the common goal of pursuing the "well-being and progress of the

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[17] La Casa de Guanacaste established statutes and rules for its activities, which were published in El Guanacaste. The statutes determined aspects such as affiliates, membership charges, voting, representatives, and the prohibition of open political and religious activities within the society, as the law of associations demanded. *El Guanacaste* also published the anthem of La Casa, "Marcha de la Casa de Guanacaste," written by José A. Ramírez Saizar. "Estatutos de la 'Casa de Guanacaste'," *El Guanacaste*, April 1, 1935. Among the founders of La Casa were lawyers Alvarez Hurtado and Francisco Faerron; Ramón Zelaya; teachers Manuel Angel López Bonilla, Higinio Vega Orozco, Marcelino Canales, Mariano Salazar, Manuel Grillo, Zacarías Cháves, Francisco Carrillo, Fabio Carrillo, Juan Rafael López Bonilla, Alejandro García, Rubén Báez. "Casa de Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, August 18, 1936, 1, 6.

[18] At the beginning La Casa de Guanacaste changed its board of management every three months. In July 1935, the board was formed by the following Guanacastecans: Presidente Salvador Villar, Vice-President Manuel Angel López Bonilla, Secretario Liborio Flores, Pro-Secretario Máximo Solano, Tesorero Rubén Báez, Fiscal Andrés Santana. Vocales Manuel Grillo, Rafael Gutierrez, Matilde Gutierrez. "Nueva Directiva de La Casa de Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, July 20, 1935, 2. However, very soon the election of a new board every three months was recognized as a factor of instability, and in January *El Guanacaste* published a small column reporting that La Casa had been experiencing "eight days of anarchy," as the new Board had not been elected because of the lack of quórum in the Society's assembly. "Ocho días de anarquía," *El Guanacaste*, January 20, 1936, 2. The new board was elected in the January 19th Assembly. "Nueva Directiva de 'La Casa de Guanacaste', " *El Guanacaste*, February 1, 1936, 1. Another new Board was announced in October 1936. This board was composed of president Manuel Angel López Bonilla, vice-president Higinio Vega Orozco, secretary Marcelino Canales, "pro-secretary" Luis Montiel, treasurer José María Zúñiga Lupi, fiscal Fabio Carrillo, and voting member Jesús Vega Orozco. *El Guanacaste*, October 8, 1936, 1. On the same page, there is a note about the exchange of *El Guanacaste* with the Nicaraguan *La Información*, from Chinandega.

province."[19] Representing an entire province seemed to them an entirely legitimate and feasible goal, to the extreme that some of the leaders of La Casa de Guanacaste considered themselves the only "true representatives of Guanacastecan unity."[20] This position generated criticism on the part of some authors publishing in other newspapers.[21]

Most of the leaders of La Casa thought of themselves as promoters of Guanacastecan regionalism on a totally new level, in which Guanacastecans would be led to acquire consciousness of the particular situation of their province—the lack of attention by the central government—and take unified action to straighten out that unjust state of affairs. The only way of achieving regional goals was to abandon petty quarrels and understand that Guanacaste was not just a province like any other, because the other provinces always received the attention of the government, without any additional effort, while Guanacaste had always been left behind.[22] The only solutions were for

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[19] Liborio Flores, "De pié, Guanacastecos!," *El Guanacaste*, March 1, 1935, 2. The emergence of regionalist periodicals was a common phenomenon in many countries in the 1930s, and, for example, in the case of Finland, has been explained by market forces rather than by other kinds of interests. See Jaana Hujanen, *Journalismin maakunnallisuus. Alueellisuuden rakentuminen maakuntalehtien teksteissä ja tekijöiden puheessa* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, 2000), 30-31. The founders of La Casa de Guanacaste and *El Guanacaste* newspaper considered that it was their task to decide what the province's interests were and how to explain them in the paper, in essence asking, along with Hujanen, "how to represent a community whose interests do not articulate even on the higher levels…?" Ibid., 10. [My translation from Finnish.] When reading *El Guanacaste* of the 1930s, it becomes clear that representing the "common" interests of the province—as the newpaper claimed—was an impossible task, especially taking into account the social asymmetries and conflict in the region.

[20] See "'La Casa de Guanacaste' es la verdadera y única abanderada del movimiento unionista en Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, July 20, 1935, 1. See also, Francisco Leal, "¿Ilusos, locos o quijotes?" *El Guanacaste*, July 10, 1935, 3. It is importat to bear in mind that most of the activities of La Casa took place in the capital city.

[21] See for example, "Dr. Baltodano y la Casa Guanacaste," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 1, 1935, 23.

[22] The promoters of regionalism were aware of the serious rivalries between the inhabitants of Liberia and those residing south of the Tempisque river, and called for searching out common interests among the localities. According to *Diario de Costa Rica*, "Existe entre estos dos cantones [Liberia and Santa Cruz] un antagonismo infundado, el cual no debe convertirse en odio entre los habitantes, sino en aspiración de progreso de ambos pueblos." *Diario de Costa Rica*, January 5, 1929, 6. A good example of the attempts at

Guanacastecans to come together and force the government to listen to their demands, or—even better—to resolve their problems through their own common and coordinated action.[23] As a typical editorial exhorted, "El resurgimiento de las fuerzas adormidas en la actualidad en la Provincia, se alcanzará solamente mediante la unión solícita de todos los exponentes vivos del Guanacaste y de la cooperación activa y constructora…"[24]

El Guanacaste also heralded the idea that the inhabitants of the province were members of one big family, and therefore the promoters of regionalism were obliged to provide an example of fraternity for those who did not believe in the regionalist project. Andrés Santana, one of the editors of the paper, saw a struggle for hearts and sentiments:

> Aun cuando ciertos compañeros opinan que no debemos usar ya el sentimentalismo para unir a los guanacastecos, yo pienso de distinta manera y sí estoy errado en el modo de actuar, que se me perdone en obsequio a la sinceridad con que expongo mis ideas.… Unámonos para que seamos fuertes; fraternicémonos para extirpar el odio localista que reina en el corazón de los pueblos. Ese odio de que con justa razón se queja don Francisco Mayorga y que yo le digo al estimado compañero y amigo que es esa la finalidad de 'La Casa de Guanacaste': lucha por destruir esas divisiones injustificadas que sustentan grupos de guanacastecos y que son la verdadera causa del retardo del progreso intelectual y material de nuestros pueblos.[25]

The promoters of regionalism were worried about divisions and even "hatred" among localities, which they cited as an important cause of the "delay" of intellectual and material progress in the province. Yet the editor who expressed preoccupation over local

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erasing the discords was the friendly visit of Liberians to Nicoya in 1929. *Diario de Costa Rica*, April 5, 1929, 4.

[23] "No estamos en la misma condición de los demás provincianos hermanos que, unidas o no, siempre tendrán la solicita atención de los gobernantes." "Editorial: La armonía guanacasteca y la nueva conciencia regional," *El Guanacaste*, October 10, 1935, 1.

[24] *El Guanacaste*, July, 1, 1936, 2.

[25] A. Santana C., "La maleficencia," *El Guanacaste*, April 1, 1935, 2.

rivalries at the same time insisted that Guanacastecans as people shared a positive human character that was unique. This seemingly contradictory construction created a common character for all the province's inhabitants as a normative way to demand Guanacastecans honor certain regionalist ideals and, at the same time, made it possible for the regionalist leaders to criticize their fellow provincials if they did not conform to the supposedly natural shared norm.

The discourse of unity and harmony was also employed as an instrument to hold regionalism aloof from social conflicts in the province. In 1936, the editorial column of *El Guanacaste* declared that Guanacastecans were upright people who valued honestly acquired remuneration, and that due to that common characteristic Guanacastecan employers were unable to abuse their *peones*, who, for their part, did not think their *patrón* was stealing from them. Thanks to "God's will," total harmony existed between employers and workers:

> Los guanacastecos damos infinitas gracias a la Providencia de que nuestro pueblo practique honestamente todavía este precepto y por ello existe allá una casi total armonía entre los patrones, por lo general considerados e incapaces de mezquinos abusos, y sus buenos peones y empleado en cuyas mentes no priva el prejuicio de que se les roba, ni están pensando en que los haberes del patrón les pertenece…[26]

This discourse on harmony on the one hand erased the agrarian problem and growing social conflict in the province and, on the other, defined the rules employers and employees should follow in order to contribute to concord and unity within the region, which was their obligation as acceptable Guanacastecans.[27]

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[26] "Editorial: ¡Feliz año nuevo!," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1936, 1.

[27] Others sought non-confrontational ways to discuss the class relations in Guanacaste, like the pseudonymous Minos Gracel who very respectfully asked the landowners to pay better wages to the

Some editors of *El Guanacaste* were worried about the land problem, and others went so far as to question the increasing levels of labor exploitation in Guanacaste in 1935, but there was no clear editorial line concerning these issues. It is also difficult to know who wrote what, because the editorials were not signed and each issue of newspaper named three or four editors, in addition to three or four directors and an administrator. The editorials discussed the problematic situation of Guanacastecan agriculture in ways that sought guilty parties not within the province but in the central government, highlighting problems surrounding landownership, the difficulty of financing seasonal plantings, and access to domestic markets. A 1935 editorial on the situation of landownership in the municipalities of Guanacaste concluded that:

> Como se ve, el problema agrario en Guanacaste presenta caracteres que hacen imperativa la acción del Estado, con una política bien definida a favor del parcelamiento de la tierra a fin de aumentar el número raquítico de propietarios. La República no puede permanecer indiferente… porque el problema, grave desde ahora, tiende fatalmente a agudizarse con el correr de los años, y la paz social y los atributos de la democracia costarricense desparecerán conforme aumente en intensidad el problema que entraña una mala división del agro nacional.[28]

For the author of the editorial, the solution to the land problem had to come from the central government, as social peace and democracy were at stake. In the same issue, a column written by an author who was not member of the group of editors, Medardo Guido Acevedo, argued that many rural workers who previously held land and enjoyed independent livings had now been ruined by the clumsy and hostile greed of large estate

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agricultural workers and cowboys: "pedimos, con todo respeto, a los patrones de las haciendas guanacastecas, lo mismo que a las industrias, etc. aumento de salarios a peones y sabaneros, seguro de vida para los trabajadores, y buena alimentación. El peón y el sabanero es todo un programa de lucha que trataremos de seguir." "El peón y el sabanero," *El Guanacaste,* April, 10, 1936, 3.

[28] "Editorial: El complejo agrario de Guanacaste enfocado desde nuestro punto de vista. Parecelamiento de la tierra. Financiación de las siembras y un mercado para cosechas," *El Guanacaste*, November 10, 1935, 1.

owners. Guido Acevedo asked why the great landowners, with their enormous extensions of land, did not cede a small part to the poor agricultural worker whom they had ruined in the first place.[29] Two different solutions—one pointing to the state and the other to the landowners—were offered for the agrarian problem in the same issue of *El Guanacaste,* a typical situation in this newspaper.

Maximiliano Soto Fernández, a large-scale landowner in Guanacaste, son of former president Bernardo Soto and great nephew of former president Tomás Guardia, expressed his understanding of the difficulties of Guanacaste on the pages of *El Guanacaste*. The province had not been affected by the crisis generated by the world depression, Soto explained. Instead of unemployment, Guanacaste suffered from labor scarcity and a lack of communications:

> El Guanacaste es la única región de la República en la que la crisis no se ha sentido, ni en lo económico ni en el trabajo de los peones. Más bien hay una constante escasez de brazos. Las gentes viven bien y están satisfechas. En todas partes se siente la potencialidad y riqueza de aquella prodigiosa tierra. Faltan únicamente vías de comunicación. De llegarse a realizar el trazado de la carretera Panamericana, Guanacaste se pierde de vista.[30]

It was typical of the *hacendados* to turn away from social problems to the question of the need for roads and railroads. But to affirm in 1935 that "people lived well and were satisfied" in Guanacaste would inevitably generate reactions of incredulity, and *El Guanacaste* served as vehicle for these opposing voices too. Pseudonymous

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[29] He described the peasants as "arruinados por la ambición codiciosa, torpe y hostil de muchos propietarios latifundistas. ¿Por qué esos hombres que hoy gozan de grandes extensions no le facilitan un pedazo de terreno al pobre trabajador, que hoy se lamenta habiendo sido arruinado por ellos mismos?" Medardo Guido Acevedo, "Fases regionales del Guanacaste, " *El Guanacaste*, November 10, 1935, 4. Guido Acevedo worked as a primary school teacher in Bagaces.

[30] "Deben acostumbrarse las gentes a la idea de que Guanacaste no queda tan lejos como Asia o Africa," *El Guanacaste*, July 8, 1936, 6.

"Indoespañol" replied to Soto that if labor was scarce in Guanacaste, it was because the wages were not high enough for survival and poor people were forced to leave and look for better wages and lives elsewhere. Moreover, Guanacaste was the province that had been most negatively affected by the world depression:

> Los guanacastecos hemos sentido la crisis económica más que en ninguna otra parte porque el 75% de sus fincas no valen por falta de inscripción: los acaparadores y chinos han hecho su más preciado agosto en esta época de depresión; las ventanas en el comercio han decaído totalmente, indicando disminuciones considerables en los negocios; la industria maderera cayó totalmente; la concha perla y las minas de manganeso oro y plata en ruina total; los prestamistas han cobrado intereses usurarios; la baja de los salarios a peones macheteros, jornaleros y sabaneros ha sido hecho consumado; los ganaderos en general que se dedicaban a repastar abandonaron ese negocio; los agricultores en pequeño han tenido que entregarse atados de pies y manos a los 'chinos' y comerciantes que succionan la energía de esos hombres, comprando granos a precios regalados; los numerosísimos pobres que somos en la provincia, cuando enfermamos morimos, por falta de dineros con que pagar a los médicos de pueblos y con que cancelar las recetas que son carísimas. …
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> En haciendas de mucho movimiento, de mucho peones, la cocinera, ganando bien, le pagan C 25.00 al mes. El peón machetero, cuando le dan comida C 1.00 o bien C 1.50. Si hasta hoy, en ellos, ha habido conformidad y mansedumbre, en un futuro no lejano, habrá rebeldía pues deben conquistar derechos a vivir mejor con salarios ajustados a los gastos de un hogar. El señor Soto Fernández perdonará que le adversemos, pero "la espina sólo la siente quien la tiene adentro."[31]

"Indoespañol," clearly aware of the potentially explosive situation in the haciendas, felt it was necessary to use a pseudonym to respond to Soto Fernández. These kinds of open clashes were neither frequent nor followed by wider debates on the pages of *El Guanacaste.* Far more usual were the exhortations to harmony and union of all Guanacastecans as a community, and to honesty, integrity, and persistence as individuals.

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[31] "La escasez de brazos en Guanacaste no es porque haya abundancia de trabajos, sino porque hombres y mujeres buscan lugares del país donde puedan ganarse mejor la vida," *El Guanacaste*, July 15, 1936, 1, 5.

In this regard, it is worth noting that "Indoespañol" named as Guanacastecan small farmers' worst exploiters not (Guanacastecan) landowners, but rather immigrant Chinese merchants, who he claimed were taking advantage of the depression by buying local farmers' products cheaply while selling them goods and foodstuffs at high prices. [32]

"Indoespañol" was only one among many Costa Rican intellectuals who chose to blame Chinese immigrants for aggravating the negative impact of the world depression on the national economy, especially in peripheral regions such as Guanacaste. Just as in Mexico, where sinophobia was "functionally related to *indigenista* nationalism," both Costa Rican nationalism and Guanacastecan regionalism relied on anti-Chinese discourse.[33] The government of Costa Rica had campaigned against illegal Chinese immigration since the late nineteenth century.[34] From the start of the twentieth century, Costa Rican governments began to implement a program of "self-immigration," arguing that given that it had proved impossible to attract "enough" white European immigrants, the government had to start caring about the nation's health and take measures to guarantee the "improvement of the race" by implementing hygiene legislation.[35]

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[32] *El Guanancaste* frequently published columns describing Guanacastecans as victims of "Oriental exploitation." "Más unidad de acción y mayor fraternidad," *El Guanacaste*, November 20, 1935, 1. For a Chinese response to Ramón Zelaya, see, "El Doctor Zelaya y los chinos," *Diario de Costa Rica,* September 8, 1934, 6.

[33] Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," in Richard Graham et al, *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940* (Texas, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 96-97.

[34] Ronald Soto Quirós, "Inmigración e identidad nacional, 1904-1942. Los 'otros' reafirman el 'nosotros'." (*Licenciatura* thesis, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1998); "Un intento de historia de la inmigración en Costa Rica. El discurso sobre la inmigración a principios del siglo XX: una estrategia nacionalista de selección autovalorativa," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 40 (July-Dec. 1999):79-105. See also Lara Elizabeth Putnam, "Ideología racial, práctica social y Estado liberal en Costa Rica," *Revista de Historia* (Costa Rica) 39 (Jan.-July 1999): 139-186, and *The Company They Kept: Migrants and the Politics of Gender in Caribbean Costa Rica, 1870-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Guanacastecan leaders had contributed to the official project of "self-immigration" by fomenting sinophobia and racism in Congress in 1915, when Guanacastecan congressman Leonidas Briceño proposed a law to prohibit Costa Rican women from marrying black, Asian, or otherwise "degenerated" men in order to avoid the "degeneration" of Costa Ricans.[36] In the 1920s and 1930s Guanacastecan publicists continued to worry about Chinese immigration, and discussed the problem on the pages of *La Nueva Prensa* and *Diario de Costa Rica*, among others, before *El Guanacaste* was founded.[37] The possibility of uncontrolled Chinese immigration aroused generalized anxiety in the Costa Rican press, and in 1934 the government carried out an investigation into illegal Chinese immigration, finding that ten of the twelve Chinese in Liberia had entered Costa Rica in an "irregular" way. According to the press, there were 600 Chinese immigrants in Costa Rica and most of them had come into the country in ways that were not legal.[38]

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[35] Steven Palmer, "Hacia la 'auto-inmigración': el nacionalismo oficial en Costa Rica, 1870-1930," in *Identidades nacionales y Estado moderno en Centroamérica*, compiled by Arturo Taracena Arriola and Jean Piel (San José: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995), 75-85.

[36] According to Congressman Briceño's proposal, every candidate for marriage would have been required to present a certificate of good health. Briceño explained that the cases of black men killing their wives or lovers were dangerously increasing, and for that reason it was urgent to impede Costa Rican women from marrying individuals of black or yellow races or individuals of any race that were "unskillful," unable to hear or speak, epileptics, or had any other kind of "problem" that could contribute to "degeneration of their descendants." "Se va a prohibir que las mujeres costarricenses se casen con negros, asiáticos o también con degenerados. Cada aspirante al matrimonio deberá exhibir un certificado de buena salud." *La Prensa Libre*, June 17, 1915, 2.

[37] See, for instance, "Aires guanacastecos," *La Nueva Prensa*, May 10, 1924, 4; "Conviene la inmigración japonesa," *La Nueva Prensa*, May 16, 1924, 2; "Fueron rechazados 5 chinos," *La Nueva Prensa*, May 29, 1924, 4; "El Guanacaste contra los chinos," *La Nueva Prensa*, June 18, 1924, 1; *Diario de Costa Rica*, October 18, 1933, 2; "El Doctor Zelaya y los chinos," *Diario de Costa Rica*, September 8, 1934, 6.

[38] "Más de 600 ciudadanos chinos han sido empadronados," *Diario de Costa Rica*, August 12, 1934, 13. On Chinese inmigration and the "yellow invasion" in early-twentieth-century Costa Rica, see Soto Quirós, "Inmigración e identidad nacional," 250-328. According to the census of 1927, there were forty-one Chinese-born residents in the province, thirty-one of them property owners. There were fifty-one U.S.-born

One might well have thought that such a miniscule group of immigrants—with a mere fraction of the economic weight that North American and Eurpoean landowners and merchants wielded in Costa Rica—would not even merit consideration as a contributing factor in the social and economic crises that wracked Costa Rica in the 1930s. One would be wrong. One of the more moderate formulations of the anti-Chinese argument came in 1934 from Guanacastecan intellectual Salvador Villar, who recognized that the number of foreigners in Guanacaste was relatively small, and that most of them came from Nicaragua. The Chinese in Guanacaste were dedicated almost completely to trade, he wrote, and there was not a village without a Chinese immigrant selling commodities and monopolizing the commercialization of local products. According to Villar, the monopoly would not have been a problem had the Chinese invested their high profits in local farming, industry, or real estate; however, instead of contributing to the local economy, they sent the profits to their families in China.[39]

For *El Guanacaste*, in turn, one of the most important factors in the province's problems was the "large" and powerful Chinese immigrant population, who shamelessly exploited the humble Guanacastecan farmers. According to *El Guanacaste,* due to the bad road conditions Guanacastecan farmers were not able to export their products quickly enough to reach Central Valley markets, and therefore were forced to sell their products cheaply to the local Chinese merchants, who paid little and charged exorbitant prices for their products. More than once, the columnists of *El Guanacaste* claimed that the

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residents, twenty-eight of them owning properties. All ten Spanish-born immigrants in Guanacaste were property owners. *Censo de Población 1927*, http://censos.ccp.ucr.ac.cr/cgi-bin/we5.pl

[39] Salvador Villar, "Guanacaste: monografía histórica y geográfica," in *Anuario General de Costa Rica* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta Borrasé, 1934), 86. Cited also by Ronald Soto, "Inmigración e identidad nacional," 321-322. Salvador Villar became the first director of *El Guanacaste* in 1935, and Governor of the province in 1936.

government needed to stop importing food and start building roads to Guanacaste so that the entire country could have access to the crops produced in Guanacaste. The old infrastructure plaint was now framed in terms of the need to help Guanacastecan farmers free themselves from "Chinese exploitation." The Chinese, according to Ramón Zelaya, were buying the entire rice crop and reselling it to profiteers in the "interior del país." In addition to being forced to sell their products to Chinese merchants and intermediaries, Guanacastecan farmers had to receive payment half in cash and half in goods—which were frequently spoilt or in bad condition. And if some Guanacastecan farmer rejected receiving those commodities as part of payment, the Chinese merchant would not buy his crops.[40]

El Guanacaste demanded that Guanacastecans stop being simple victims of "Oriental" exploitation and start practicing the same collective and protectionist activities in which the immigrant communities seemed to have so much expertise.[41] Until Guanacastecans learned to work like those "Orientals," they would not get out of slavery to the foreigners:

> Prácticamente son los chinos los banqueros de los agricultores del Guanacaste; ellos les adelantan el dinero para sus siembras, y después le ponen precio al artículo, y lo toman en pago de su crédito. El agricultor pasa por ese aro, porque por falta de la previsión y del auxilio de la Administración Pública, las cosas tienen que ser así. Tal es la esclavitud del agricultor guanacasteco, que la que no ha sabido redimirlo ningún Gobierno, hasta la fecha. Estos problemas de aquella Provincia no se estudian, no se analizan, no se toman ni en cuenta; no se resuelven nunca.

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[40] *El Guanacaste*, October 8, 1936, 1.

[41] "Oriental" also included "Turks," immigrants from the Middle Eastern countries who were also considered to have a negative impact in the region's economy. "Editorial: Más unidad de acción y mayor fraternidad," *El Guanacaste*, November 20, 1935, 1.

> Cómo se quiere, entonces, que progrese, que se desarrolle, que tribute y que sea factor de la riqueza nacional?[42]

Guanacaste's sinophobia was based on racism and reinforced by nationalism and regionalism alike. During the early years of the twentieth century, sinophobia drew on the logic of collective racial threat that animated the national government's vision of "self-immigration" and related policies of hygiene and "regeneration." Racism against the Chinese continued in the 1930s; however, now the regionalist discourse focused on the perceived negative economic impact of the Chinese in the province rather than any perceived threat to public health or population eugenics. (Meanwhile, *El Guanacaste* had not given up hope of attracting large numbers of immigrants to colonize the province, as long as they were not Chinese.[43]) Anti-Chinese xenophobia provided an irresistible alibi for regional poverty, pointing the finger at a nationally despised and politically powerless immigrant minority, rather than at the wealthy and well-connected landowners—fellow Guanacastecans!—who most benefited from the inequities provincial power structures maintained.

La Casa leaders and the editors of *El Guanacaste* were convinced they were promoting a totally new type of movement and ideology. However, regionalist discourse at the beginning of this new phase continued to be heterogeneous, although it was more elaborated and organized than in the 1920s. An influential Liberian-born lawyer and writer, Ramón Zelaya, had explained already in 1933 that the abandonment of

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[42] "La energía eléctrica en Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, June 20, 1936, 4.

[43] In the first issue of *El Guanacaste*, Antonio Álvarez Hurtado wrote about an investigation by Víctor Lorz in the Escuela de Agricultura suggesting that Guanacaste could receive one million inhabitants. The idea was to promote the formation of immigrant agricultural settlements in Guanacaste. A. Alvarez Hurtado, "De nuevo," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 2.

Guanacaste had begun in the twentieth century because the ruling group—the liberal 'Olimpo'—had lived "near the moon," far away from the country's reality, neglecting "the land of the gauchos."[44] According to *El Guanacaste*, the province of Guanacaste had been and continued to be treated like a colony of Costa Rica. The governors and other state employees came from the Central Highlands; even the representatives of the province in the national congress lived in the Central Highlands, which was unacceptable, according to these Guanacastecan writers.[45] This "new" Guanacastecan regionalism continued along the same path laid out at the beginning of the century: the denunciation of discrimination against Guanacaste within the nation. A Guanacastecan intellectual, and leader of the new organization, Francisco Carrillo, wrote among other issues about the poor execution of laws approved to improve Guanacaste's public services such as hospitals and health centers. For example, the Decree no. 59 of June 20, 1933, which assigned 12,000 and 8,000 *colones* to Santa Cruz and Nicoya respectively in order to

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[44] Ramón Zelaya, *Tierra guanacasteca* (San José, Costa Rica: Imprenta de La Tribuna, 1933), 5. Olimpo was the nickname given to a group of liberal intellectuals, scientists, and politicians who first came to power in the 1880s and returned after 1902, basically including this latter period the two administrations of Cleto González Víquez (1906-1910 and 1928-1932), and the three of Ricardo Jiménez Oreamuno (1910-1914, 1924-1928 and 1932-1936). See Héctor Pérez Brignoli, *Breve historia contemporánea de Costa Rica* (México: F.C.E., 1997), 100-101; Iván Molina, *Costarricense por dicha: identidad nacional y cambio cultural en Costa Rica durante los siglos XIX y XX* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 2002), ch. 1-2; Gerardo Morales, *Cultura oligárquica y nueva intelectualidad en Costa Rica: 1880-1914*, 1.ed, 2. reprint (Heredia, Costa Rica: EUNA, 1995); Orlando Salazar Mora, *El apogeo de la república liberal en Costa Rica 1870-1914* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1990), 59-67. According to Salazar, for example, in the 1913 elections, the Olimpo was a weak political force in peripheral regions of Costa Rica, receiving only 19% of total votes in Guanacaste. Salazar, *El apogeo*, 235. According to Lehoucq and Molina, although only a fifth of the electorate was in the peripheral regions of the country (Limón, Puntarenas, and Guanacaste), 48% of the charges of electoral fraud came from these provinces during the "Olimpo" period from 1901 to 1912. Twenty percent of total fraud accusations in Costa Rica came from Guanacaste in this period. Fabrice E. Lehoucq and Iván Molina, *Stuffing the Ballot Box: Fraud, Electoral Reform, and Democratization in Costa Rica* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 45, 49. See also Iván Molina Jiménez, "Elecciones y democracia en Costa Rica, 1885-1913," *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies* 70 (April 2001): 44.

[45] "Diputaciones…?," *El Guanacaste*, November 20, 1935, 1.

build health centers, was never executed, and later the money was used for other projects. In many cases, Guanacastecans had to travel more than a hundred kilometers to get to a hospital for treatment.[46] These kinds of denunciations were published practically in every issue of the paper.

The lack of infrastructural progress in the province was the principal topic of *El Guanacaste,* and the discussion became increasingly critical and confrontational. In 1936, *El Guanacaste* frequently repeated slogans on its cover page referring to the lack of railroads and road building projects. The column titles also repeated that Guanacaste was the only province in Costa Rica without railroads or other reliable communication routes (Fig. 4.1).[47] *El Guanacaste* also published an open letter from Manuel J. Grillo A.—a well-known Guanacastecan pharmacist—to the Guanacastecan congressmen with the title of "Soon there will be good routes of communication in the Guanacaste." The letter reminded the representatives of the province that Congress had approved *Ley No. 192*, on the cigar tax in August of 1934 to finance road building in Guanacaste, and by now there should have been enough money to start the works. It is quite obvious that the title was not to be understood literally but as an ironic barb on the part of somebody who already did not expect much of traditional Guanacastecan politicians.[48] Equally ironic was a table published by the newspaper, which registered the payroll of road construction workers in the different provinces from June 18 to 24, 1936. The table showed that there

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[46] Francisco Carrillo O., "Algunas referencias sobre la necesidad de Hospitales en Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, April 1, 1935, 5.

[47] "Ni una vara de camino se ha construido en el Guanacaste con el sobreimpuesto de los cigarrillos destinado a ese fin," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1936, 2. "La Provincia de Gte no tiene verdaderas vías de comunicación," *El Guanacaste*, June 10, 1936, 1.

[48] *El Guanacaste*, July 1, 1936, 2.

had been extremely small investment in wages (only 0.3% of the total payroll) for day laborers on road construction and repairs in Guanacaste compared to the other provinces. (Fig. 4.1)

Sin comentarios

Decreto No. 178 de 11/8/33.—Fondo Permanente de O. P. ..... ₡21549.35

Planillas de jornales de la Dirección General de Caminos, de los trabajos efectuados durante la semana del 18 al 24 de junio anterior, en la construcción y reparación de caminos y carreteras, así:

En la provincia de Heredia.....	₡ 6670.60
En la provincia de Cartago.....	1196.95
En la Provincia de Puntarenas.....	462.00
En la provincia de Guanacaste.....	82.50
En la provincia de San José.....	3948.60
En la provincia de Alajuela	8684.70
En la provincia de Heredia (acarreos.	504.00
Total.....	₡ 24559.35

Publíquese.—Contés.—Por el Secretario de Estado en el Despacho de Hacienda y Comercio, el de Gobernación.—Luis Fernández.

Fig. 4.1 The payroll of the day laborers employed by the Dirección General de Carreteras in construction and repair of roads and highways, June 18-24. *El Guanacaste*, July 15, 1936, 7.

The lack of roads and railroads was discussed in nearly every issue of the paper, and was seen as the primary obstacle to the progress of Guanacaste. Comparisons to the other regions of the country were frequent, accompanied by statistics detailing the infrastructural backwardness of the province in contrast to the progress of the Central

Highlands.[49] A columnist in 1936 compared Tilarán to Limón and argued that Tilarán could become an even more important banana producer than Limón. With a railroad—a project that had been shut down by the myopic congressmen, although it had been the "clearest vision" of Secretary of Public Works and future president León Cortés—Tilarán would be exporting bananas of a much better quality than those produced in Limón.[50] Naturally, the news of government plans to build a railroad to the small community of Puriscal in the Central Highlands outraged the editorialists of *El Guanacaste*, who declared that while Puriscal was only an "hacienda," Guanacaste was the "granary" of the nation, and therefore a railroad to Guanacaste was far more justified than one to Puriscal.[51]

In order to reduce unemployment produced by the consequences of the world depression, the government of Ricardo Jiménez (1932-1936) increased investment in public works mainly in the Central Highlands. These works were propelled by the Jiménez administration's Secretary of Public Works, who became president after Jiménez. León Cortés continued and strengthened the project during his administration from 1936 to 1940, which came to be known as the government of "cement and iron bar," for its investment in public buildings, roads, and other infrastructural works.[52] However,

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[49] "La acción de los futuros diputados," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1936, 2. See also, "Notas amargas," *El Guanacaste*, June 1, 1936, 1.

[50] "Sierra de Tilarán. El banano y su larga vida de plantación," *El Guanacaste*, April 10, 1936, 2.

[51] "Editorial: Quique Suum," *El Guanacaste*, August 8, 1936, 1. As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is questionable whether Guanacaste was actually the *granary* of Costa Rica. Moreover, no railroad was built in Puriscal.

[52] Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época*, 49-50, 69; Iván Molina and Steven Palmer, *Costa Rica 1930-1996*, 10. The budget of the Ministry of Public Works increased every year and was the highest of all the governmental offices during the Cortés Castro administration. Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época*, 69-70.

as the editorialists fully recognized, little of this investment reached beyond Central Highland towns. The policy of large-scale road construction created huge expectations among Guanacastecans, who initially were confident that their province would receive its rightful share of progress, but soon became frustrated with the lack of execution. In June 1935, the leading members of La Casa met with Secretary of Public Works and presidential candidate León Cortés and presented him with a seven-part petition on behalf of the province of Guanacaste. The candidate politely listened to the delegation, and responded in a few days with a letter. The petition and the then-candidate's response were published in *El Guanacaste* soon after León Cortés won the elections in 1936, with the comment that as Secretary of Public Works in the previous administration Cortés had spent more than four hundred thousand *colones* in public works in Guanacaste.[53] This statement contradicts the newspaper's own prior version and the position the paper adopted upon Guanacastecan activists' disillusion with Cortés government less than a year later.[54] At the end of the 1930s, there were 653.5 kilometers of different types of paved roads (asphalt, macadam, rubble, concrete) in the country, and only 16 kilometers of those were in Guanacaste and were macadamized.[55] The rest of the roads in the

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[53] "Los guanacastecos tenemos completa fe en los ofrecimientos del futuro Presidente Licenciado don León Cortés C.," *El Guanacaste*, March 10, 1936, 1.

[54] See the repeating slogans on the cover pages of *El Guanacaste*, especially during 1936. The first signs of disillusion began upon the naming of governmental secretaries, who did not include any Guanacastecan: "En medio del regocijo general que ha producido el resonante triunfo del candidato señor Cortés, los guanacastecos llenos de desilusión hemos podido constatar una vez más una triste realidad. Nuestra Provincia continuará siendo 'La Cenicienta costarricense'. Y decimos esto así, escuetamente, sin preámbulos ni rodeos, a conforme es costumbre en el espíritu abierto, franco y decidido de nosotros los hijos de aquella cálida tierra, sin ánimo de reproche… Nos referimos a la prescindencia absoluta que se hizo de los valores guanacastecos... a la hora de formación de gabinete. Pareciera que en el instante preciso se olvidara de los Alvarez Hurtado, Faerron, Baltodano, para no extender la lista." *El Guanacaste*, February 20, 1936, 1.

province were dirt. During the Cortés administration, 25,388,543 *colones* were spent on public works, only about 7% of it in Guanacaste. Of the 1,838,108 *colones* invested in the province, 732,710 went to the construction of governmental buildings (including the army headquarters in Liberia), 318,051 to school buildings, and the rest to roads, bridges, pipelines, and sewer systems.[56] The disillusion of Guanacastecans with León Cortés was profound, and very soon their organization began to criticize his government openly. By 1937 the relation with the Cortés administration was highly conflictive.

The new technology of radio transmission also began to serve as medium of political agitation, and speeches were broadcast to promote the regionalist association and movement, like the one delivered by Professor Figuer del Valle in February 1935, calling for Guanacastecans to unite to resolve their problems against the negligence of the government.[57] As the national government's deficit spending expanded, both the editors and the letters to the editor of *El Guanacaste* trumpeted the fact that instead of receiving something in return for the taxes they paid, Guanacastecans were being born with a debt whose source and beneficiaries were the central government and the capital city. Every Costa Rican—it was said—instead of coming to the world with the proverbial "encouraging bread bun underneath the arm" (*alentador bollo de pan debajo del brazo*)

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[55] Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época*, 31. According to Carolyn Hall, in 1924 there were no asphalt or concrete roads in Costa Rica, but by 1940, a total of 365 km were of these materials. In 1924, approximately 150 km, and in 1940, 423 km of the entire country's roads were of macadam and gravel. Carolyn Hall, *Costa Rica: A Geographical Interpretation in Historical Perspective* (Dellplain Latin American Studies, no. 17(Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985), 129.

[56] Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época*, 73.

[57] "Lo que oimos en la transmision de la Estación España dedicada a 'La Casa de Guanacaste'," *El Guanacaste*, March 1, 1935, 2. For instance, Santa Cruz had received the first radio station in 1925. "Se obsequia a Santa Cruz con una estación radiográfica," *La Nueva Prensa*, December 17, 1924, 6. By 1938, there were thirty-four radio stations in Costa Rica, among them, Alma Tica, la Voz del Trópico, la Voz de la Víctor, Para Ti, and América Latina. See Calvo Gamboa, *León Cortés y su época*, 22.

was now born with a four hundred-*colón* debt, including Guanacastecans, who had not produced the debt, much less enjoyed or even taken part in that "dance of millions."[58]

In addition to the traditional cry for the government's attention, a new approach appeared, urging Guanacastecans to stop weeping and lift their self-esteem. According to this position, instead of lamenting, the province's inhabitants had to take action and demand their rights as full members of the nation. Liborio Flores, one of the young editors of *El Guanacaste*, was especially dedicated to this task of waking up his fellow provincials. In the first issue of *El Guanacaste* in January 1935, he called the mission of La Casa de Guanacaste and the newspaper a "March on Rome," and went on to describe the political movement as a religious crusade. Flores said they were "preaching New Evangelism, the evangelism of Guanacastecan Union." Flores called the promoters of regionalism "the battalion of winners in motion," and demanded that Guanacastecans stop whimpering that Guanacaste had been abandoned by the central government:

> No más quejas de abandono. Ningún guanacasteco debe esperar ayuda de manos extrañas. Tú eres un semidios capaz de vencer todos los obstáculos de la indómita Naturaleza. Levántate ya! Arroja el egoismo, la pereza, el vicio, arre con todo eso que envenena el alma y retrasa nuestro progreso… desde hoy seamos hombres, seamos guanacastecos, solamente guanacastecos, y nuestra provincia renacerá a una vida de luz, de dicha, de energía y de progreso que Dios nos tiene reservada.
>
> Nadie diga que NO, en esta hora decisiva, porque quien diga "no" es un suicida despreciable que atenta cobardemente contra su propia vida, contra su propia madre, que lo es su patria, su propia provincia.
>
> Y nadie mire en este llamamiento fines personalistas o politiqueros, pues el que tal hace profana sacrílegamente la santidad de nuestros ideales.

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[58] "Editorial: Lo que vamos a decir no es música celestial porque Costa Rica es un pueblo capaz de evolucionar," *El Guanacaste*, November 1, 1935, 1.

> Esta es la Santa Cruzada de nuestras reivindicaciones, el 'batallón de la marcha de los vencedores'. Es la "Cruzada de Juventud"; de los hombres nuevos, secundada por la sabia experiencia de los viejos...
>
> De pie, guanacastecos!
> Ha llegado el momento de conocer los verdaderos valores regionales.[59]

Those Guanacastecans who did not respond positively to the call, Flores concluded, would be damned and tried for "high treason before the Court of History."[60] Among these radical exhortations, *El Guanacaste* also published a provocative letter from Guanacastecan poet Gustavo Duarte, whose language was equally aggressive:

> Mi primera sugestión es para que nuestros comprovincianos no sigan quejándose de que el Gobierno de la Meseta Central tiene olvidada a la cenicienta de la familia; para que no sigan pidiéndole ferrocarriles y carreteras ni nada que signifique beneficio para aquella región. Ese constante clamor produce pena y rubor y hiere los sentimientos de la dignidad humana.[61]

Some authors went even further with provocative language saying that Guanacastecans were principally responsible for the lack of progress in the province, because of their indifference to the province's problems and irresponsible allegiance to politicians that were neither Guanacastecans nor truly interested in resolving the region's problems.[62] With the creation of La Casa de Guanacaste and *El Guanacaste* newspaper, the incipient Guanacastecan regional movement became increasingly impatient with the

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[59] Liborio Flores, "De pie, Guanacastecos!" *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 2. Liborio Flores was one of the editors of El Guanacaste and frequently wrote that Guanacastecans should stand up for their rights as members of the nation, take action, and stop waiting for the government to do something for them. Flores died of illness in October 11, 1937. See *El Guanacaste*, October 17, 1937.

[60] Ibid.

[61] *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 7.

[62] See A. Alvarez Hurtado, "De nuevo," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 2; see also Andrés Santana C., "No más lamentaciones," *El Guanacaste*, July 10, 1935, 1-2; and "Llamamiento a los Guanacastecos," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 4.

central government. Guanacastecans were not to wait any longer but to prepare to take action to get what they had not been able to achieve through government policies. The call to stop complaining and waiting and start acting became increasingly common on the pages of *El Guanacaste*.[63]

La Casa had its headquarters in San José, but also coordinated organizing work in other provinces. For instance, in 1936, the Guanacastecan poet José A. Ramírez Sáizar went to Port Limón to promote the cause of La Casa, and acquired twenty-five newspaper subscribers in a few weeks. These subscribers in Limón were most probably Guanacastecan banana workers in the United Fruit Company plantations.[64] The success of La Casa and the newspaper in Limón was such that the Society founded its own chapter in Port Limón in November 1936. Twenty-six Guanacastecans resident in the port attended the first meeting.[65] In October 1936, La Casa and the newspaper were also in correspondence with the Nicaraguan newspaper *La Información*, based in Chinandega.[66]

La Casa de Guanacaste put great effort into publishing the newspaper, and usually the sessions of the board of management of La Casa centered on newspaper administration.[67] *El Guanacaste* suffered from problems of distribution in the province of Guanacaste, because some establishments owned by Guanacastecans who did not

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[63] See for example, "El Paraíso de Mahoma," *El Guanacaste*, March 1, 1935, 1;

[64] "Platicando…," *El Guanacaste*, August 8, 1936, 4. The UFCo plantations had suffered an important strike a couple of years before; many of the strikers were Guanacastecans. See Lara Putnam, *The Company They Kept*, 183.

[65] *El Guanacaste*, November 1, 1936, 1.

[66] *El Guanacaste*, October 8, 1936, 1.

[67] See, for example, "Crónica de la última sesión de la Casa Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, August 1, 1936, 5.

identify themselves with the regionalist project did not endeavor to sell all the issues of the paper, and returned the unsold ones. At one point all issues of the paper were being returned from Tilarán, where—according to the agent returning them—people were not interested in the paper, because most of Tilarán residents were recent immigrants from the Central Highlands and still did not consider themselves Guanacastecans.[68] Another case discussed several times on the pages of *El Guanacaste* was that of schoolteacher Cárdenas in Nicoya, who continuously sent the bundle of newspapers back without even opening it, saying that nobody was buying them. For the editors of the newspaper this posed a symbolic as well as practical problem, given that they expected Guanacastecan schoolteachers to collaborate enthusiastically with the project of creating regional identity in their students. *El Guanacaste*, continuously calling on Guanacastecan schoolteachers to participate in the activities of La Casa and the newspaper, denounced Cárdenas in bitterly ironic terms for returning the issues.[69]

Regionalism at School

Primary schools all over the world have played a crucial role in inculcating nationalism and patriotism in new generations. National identities were implanted in future citizens' minds at school from the nineteenth century onward, and Costa Rica was no exception. In Guanacaste, primary schools also became a tool for regionalist socialization. The movement's leaders incited Guanacastecan primary school teachers to

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[68] "Los vecinos de Tilarán y 'El Guanacaste'," *El Guanacaste*, July 20, 1935, 3.

[69] "Hechos y comentarios: llamamiento," *El Guanacaste*, August 8, 1936, 4. It seems that Mr. Cárdenas had visited La Casa de Guanacaste in San José and promised to collaborate, but was not fulfilling his promise. See "Tarjeta para don Saúl Cárdenas de Nicoya," *El Guanacaste*, September 20, 1935, 4; "Postal para don Saúl Cárdenas de Nicoya," *El Guanacaste*, October 1, 1935, 3, and "Reportajes sensacionales," *El Guanacaste*, November 1, 1935, 2.

teach regional identity in their school curriculum alongside nationalism. Of course, their principal task for the Costa Rican state was to teach patriotism—to inculcate in schoolchildren the sentiment of belonging most fundamentally to the nation of Costa Rica—through daily classroom rituals as well as periodic public celebrations in which the teachers pronounced passionate patriotic sermons. But many teachers also adopted the mission of creating a regional identity, and *El Guanacaste* frequently commented on their tireless labor in the province's villages and towns.[70] Male and female primary school teachers participated in the production of *El Guanacaste* and were often authors of enthusiastic columns inciting others to join the regionalist organization. In addition, *El Guanacaste* became a medium for educators to discuss more narrowly job-related issues and the problems of education and educators in the country. [71] Thus, regionalism both built on and enhanced a growing sense of professional identity among Costa Rica's provincial schoolteachers.

The impact of their ideological work was suggested by the case of the schoolchildren of La Cruz who visited La Casa de Guanacaste in San José in 1935, and afterwards wrote a letter to the editor of *El Guanacaste* narrating their experiences during the trip. The children had enjoyed their trip to the capital city, they had learned a lot, but they had become extremely unhappy upon discovering the backwardness of their

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[70] One of the praised schoolteachers was Adán Guevara, director of the primary school and also a local representative of La Casa in Bagaces in 1935. See, for example, *El Guanacaste*, October 10, 1935, 3. See also "Párrafos relativos al Informe presentado por el maestro Adán Guevara, publicado en "El Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, September 8, 1936, 6.

[71] Female students and teachers were also mentioned as positive news for the province, especially when they acquired funding for secondary schooling or finished their studies. For example, "Regresa al Guanacaste la Srta. Margarita García Moreno después de haber coronado con éxito brillante sus estudios en esta capital," *El Guanacaste*, March 6, 1938, 1.

province compared to the "interior" of the Republic.[72] According to the editors, the children related their profound sadness upon observing:

> …edificios escolares suntuosos hasta en los humildes caseríos, construidos de cemento armado, mientras los de Guanacaste pudiera decirse que son ranchos o bohíos que carecen de amplitud y comodidad. Carreteras pavimentadas aun a la par de los ferrocarriles, sobre las cuales van y vienen los camiones y los autos, de trabajo y de paseo. Esos niños sintieron en medio de la alegría que se les proporcionó, una pena intensa al hacer comparaciones entre el atraso de su provincia y el adelanto del interior. Vieron líneas férreas en todas las provincias, desde Puntarenas hasta Limón; solo una no las tiene, el Guanacaste, el antiguo Departamento… Cañerías, luz eléctrica, por doquiera. Entonces sintieron que el horizonte se les ensanchaba; ya su mundo no es el alero de la Iglesia del barrio. No están contentos. Ya sintieron las inquietudes de la civilización.[73]

After having seen paved roads and streets along with railroads, trucks, cars, pipelines, electric lights, they felt an intense sorrow for the backwardness of their province and began to desire "civilization." The ideology of progress had permeated the little Guanacastecans' minds, insisted the editors, using the pathos to exhort all to join the crusade for the progress of the province: "We are waiting for you with open arms! …From the bottom of every Guanacastecan heart has to come out a unanimous cry of 'equal treatment for Guanacaste.'"[74]

Sometimes desperation for Guanacaste's fate within the Costa Rican nation reached dramatic expressions. In April of 1936, *El Guanacaste* reported that a student of agriculture, about to commit suicide over being forced to serve time for a crime he had

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[72] "Editorial: 18 de Agosto de 1934 – 18 de Agosto de 1935," *El Guanacaste*, August 20, 1935, 1. The term "interior" was used to refer to the center of the country, contrary to the Argentine practice of calling the country's periphery the "interior."

[73] Ibid.

[74] "Editorial: 18 de Agosto de 1934 – 18 de Agosto de 1935," *El Guanacaste*, August 20, 1935, 1.

not committed, yelled as his last words: "Votes for the prosperity of my ardent land!"[75] The fact that a student embraced regionalism as his last desire suggests that the propagandist work of the Guanacastecan leaders had found a fertile soil in Guanacastecan youth. Clearly the newspaper's aim was to create an emotional effect in the readers, making them feel guilty about not being as passionate about their province as the heroic—although suicidal—student. In this sense, regionalism worked like nationalism: creating a sense of guilt and debt in the citizens.

Another way of instilling the sentiment of belonging to the province in schoolchildren, and creating a certain image of Guanacaste for the rest of society as well, were stories such as *El lector guanacasteco*, written by primary school teacher Virgilio Caamaño and published in 1935.[76] Caamaño described Guanacaste as a region with three different social environments and cultures: first, the hacienda of the *llanos*; second, the small farms surrounded by mountains and forest; and third, the coastal region with primary activities of fishing and diving against a backdrop of sea and beach. On the one hand, this subdivision of the region into three socio-economic areas—Liberia (hacienda), Nicoya (small farmers), Santa Cruz (subsistence based on seafood)—each with its respective subculture, helped children to identify themselves with a common space even as they became aware of internal local variance. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, the emphasis on geographic diversity blurred other, more important distinctions—class differences—that could have become disturbing elements in the

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[75] "Votos por la prosperidad de mi ardiente tierra, dijo en los últimos momentos de su existencia el joven estudiante de agricultura don J. Francisco Arrieta L.," *El Guanacaste*, April 1, 1936, 1.

[76] Virgilio Caamaño, *El lector guanacasteco* (San José, Costa Rica: Soley & Valverde Editores, 1935). Among other important writer was María Leal de Noguera, who wrote several children's stories portraying the lower-class children's lives in Guanacaste.

image of a common and unified space that the promoters of regionalism were creating. In this sense, primary schools was the locus and teachers, the agents, of "spatial socialization," a term offered by Anssi Paasi to denote "the process through which individual actors and collectivities are socialized as members of specific territorially bounded spatial entities and through which they more or less actively internalize collective territorial identities and shared traditions."[77]

Marketing Guanacaste: The Film Project, and Tourism

By early 1935, after six months of existence, La Casa had about eighty active members.[78] It had acquired a typewriter and other office equipment such as a stamp and business cards for the delegates. The society had representatives in all Guanacastecan municipalities and also in some other localities outside the province. La Casa's report of activities two months later mentioned that it had promised moral support to the Spanish film producer and director of Industrial Film, Ismael Rodrigo, who proposed to shoot a film about Guanacaste. La Casa's leaders were enthusiastic about the idea that Guanacaste could become famous abroad.[79] According to *El Guanacaste*, the representative of Industrial Film was in Costa Rica "to record the most important vistas and to show them to the rest of America and Europe," and had asked La Casa members—

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[77] Anssi Paasi, *Territories, boundaries, and consciousness: the changing geographies of the Finnish-Russian boundary* (Chichester, England; New York: J. Wiley & Sons, 1996), 8.

[78] *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 2.

[79] See "Reseña de labores de la casa de Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, March 1, 1935, 2. La Casa had organized balls, public lectures, and other activities. Later, the newspaper reported that the first birthday party of Casa de Guanacaste was to be celebrated with a dinner and ball in Hotel Rex in September 1, 1935. The idea was to create an active and dynamic image of La Casa as a place where the best of the society could elegantly meet. "Aniversario," *El Guanacaste*, August 20, 1935, 3. [4536]

cattle ranchers, other landowners, and merchants—to collaborate in sponsoring a film entitled GUANACASTE:

> From Puntarenas, and crossing all the corners of the Guanacastecan cantons, haciendas, rodeos, farms, forests, rivers, hunting of herons, monkeys, deer, fishing, fruit trees, plants, mines, people who disinterestedly work for the exaltation of our Guanacaste, streets, plaza, historical sites, typical celebrations, bays like the Culebra, the Coco, etc., etc.., will parade before an audience who ignores the beauties of our province.[80]

Enthusiastic about the opportunity to market their province abroad, *El Guanacaste* declared it would closely follow the filming process and announce the names of those landowners who would participate in sponsoring the film. The Spanish Film Company had promised a copy of the film to La Casa de Guanacaste, which would then provide it to institutions and groups including schools and cinemas. Great expectations arose regarding the possibility of showing foreign countries in Europe and Latin America this beautiful part of the national territory of Costa Rica, destined to evolve into a great civilization while at the same time conserving the Spanish culture, language and religion.[81] However, soon a bitter dispute between the producer and Guanacastecan landowners put an end to the project before it started. A public quarrel in the pages of El Guanacaste followed, with the producer accusing the great landowner Elías Baldioceda of not fulfilling his promise, and Baldioceda accusing the producer of not arriving at the time they had agreed to start shooting the film.[82] No film was ever produced, but what

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[80] "A los ganaderos, finqueros y comerciantes de la provincia," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 6.

[81] "La película cinematográfica de Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, April 1, 1935, 1

[82] "Sobre la Película del Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, November 20, 1935, 4.

remains clear is Guanacastecan activists' eagerness to promote their region beyond the national borders.

Equally crucial for them was locating their province in the frame of the official national racial ideology of Costa Ricans' European origins. Guanacaste was emphatically positioned as a descendant of Spanish, and specifically Andalusian, culture.[83] The very first page of the first issue of *El Guanacaste,* in January 1935, proclaimed this ideological construction in the poem that accompanied the photo of María Luisa Chamorro Mayorga, just elected Miss Guanacaste, the most beautiful young lady in Guanacaste. A well-known Guanacastecan artist composed a poem honoring the *Señorita* and the province, "the land inhabited by dark descendants of the noble Andalusia and the great Saracen Kings…."[84] The poem reveals an intensive search for not only Andalusian but medieval origins for Guanacastecan population and culture:

> Señorita... Reina de la Simpatía,
> de la tierra que habitan los morenos,
> descendientes de la noble Andalucia,
> y de los grandes Reyes Sarracenos.
>
> Señorita... en tus venas la Hidalguía,
> dice el eterno canto de los buenos;
> y por tus ojos asoma su valía,
> como nimbo de honor sóbre tus senos.
>
> Eres el mayor exponente de belleza
> y la llevas en ti misma con fijeza
> como el blasón de la raza, que heredaste.

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[83] In January 1936, *El Guanacaste* reported that former Secretary of Education Luis Dobles Segreda had given a conference in Theatro Minerva of Liberia, "ensanchando su disertación elocuente con elogios para nuestra población, manifestando que es la Andalucía de Costa Rica por la blancura de su suelo y carácter de sus habitantes.…" *El Guanacaste,* January 1, 1936, 4. foto 4585.

[84] Poem by Joaquín Salazar Solórzano, *El Guanacaste*, 1.1.1935, 1.

No naciste cual Venus de la espuma,
en un amanecer de sombras y de bruma,
sino, bajo el oro del Sol de Guanacaste...[85]

The idea of Andalusia invoked by the author of the poem suggests that a mix of Spanish and Arab traditions formed Guanacastecans' heritage. The allusion to Saracen kings relates those roots to the Arab invasion of the Iberian peninsula; seemingly the author felt compelled to explain the Guanacastecans' dark skin not as originating in the historical mixing of native Indians and black slaves, but as coming from the "nobles" of Andalusia—Spanish and Moorish. As result, the important point is not the skin color but the nobility of the Guanacastecan ancestors. The representation of Guanacaste in the mid-1930s as the *Costa Rican Andalucía* was also employed for commercial purposes, as shown in an advertisement from the national airline company, which described Liberia as overflowing with the happy spirit of the Iberian race, and the women of Santa Cruz as avatars of "fine Andalusian grace."[86] (Fig. 4.1):

[85] Ibid.

[86] Two Spanish travelers had called Guanacaste the "Costa Rican Andalucía" when passing through the province in 1906. See José Segarra and Joaquín Juliá, "Por los caminos pintorescos del Guanacaste - 1906," in Carlos Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste* (San José, Costa Rica: Ministerio de Cultura, Juventud y Deportes, 1974), 353-354.

Figure 4.1. Advertisement in *Diario de Costa Rica,* July 19, 1935, 3.

In addition to claiming Spain and Spanish culture, especially medieval Andalusia, as the origin of Guanacastecan identity, another important reference point was Argentina, perceived as an example of the prosperity that the *pampa* could provide to the country. Constant comparisons with Argentina insisted that the Guanacastecan *pampa* could also become a source of economic prosperity: Guanacastecans had to try to increase meat and

hide exports and grain production by irrigating the *pampa* and using windmills to produce energy as the Argentines were doing.[87]

In the 1930s *El Guanacaste* also participated in the consolidation and promotion of the idea of Guanacaste as a valuable tourist destiny. On the pages of the newspaper, La Casa expressed interest in becoming a travel agency for the province in order to promote both national and foreign tourism to Guanacaste.[88] *El Guanacaste* actively discussed the possibilities of developing this new industry in the province:

> La variación de viaje, al contemplar las bellezas que encierra la navegación durante ocho horas sobre el Golfo de Nicoya y el río Tempisque. La ciudad de Liberia, con la exquisita cultura de sus habitantes, las noches de luna que hacen que se vean sus casas y calles más blancas, las fincas cercanas de ganadería, y la famosa 'playa del Coco', bellísima estación natural de balneario que ofrece al pasajero toda clase de comodidades y encantos. Santa Cruz, la ciudad alegre y bulliciosa, cuyo clima ardiente parece animar a sus habitantes y visitas para la alegría y la parranda. La bella y tranquila Filadelfia, a cuya orilla se siente y se palpa el grandioso Tempisque, a donde mañana y tarde llegan las romerías de muchachas aguadoras con tinajas y baldes a surtirse del precioso líquido y en donde las lavanderas, arremangadas hasta la rodilla, dejan en poco rato la ropa blanca como las alas de las garzas que cruzan en bandadas, buscando también como ellas, su alimento en las tranquilas aguas del río. La antigua ciudad de Nicoya con su templo construido en los tiempos coloniales, con sus costumbres y fiestas tradicionales. En fin, los encantos del Guanacaste son indescriptibles y por esa razón para saborearlos, hay que hacer un viaje en el verano que resulta económico, saludable y atractivo.
>
> En la alegría de sus gentes, en sus costumbres, en el entusiasmo por la música y la espontaneidad para el canto y el baile, y en muchos otros detalles, está reflejada la influencia ANDALUZA de nuestros conquistadores que allí dejaron su huella imborrable.[89]

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[87] "Los molinos de viento y los regadíos en Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, October 10, 1935, 1.

[88] See, for example, "Conoce usted Guanacaste…?," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1936, 1. "Turismo hacia Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, January 20, 1936, 1, 4. "Guanacaste está llamado a ser el centro de atracción del turismo criollo y extranjero," and "Guanacaste está dotada de todas las características capaces de atraer el Turismo americano y europeo," *El Guanacaste*, October 8, 1936, 1, 5.

The image of Guanacaste created by the newspaper was one of a region of diversity in terms of culture and nature, with deep history and happy people. As the author turned his optic from the natural setting to the people who animated it, he hurried to remind readers—before any other image or association could trouble their mind—that the special joyfulness of Guanacastecans, their rich culture, music, and dance, reflected the Andalusian legacy brought by Spanish *conquistadores*. Subaltern groups and their everyday life thus became a picturesque part of local tourist attractions, different from the rest of the (Spanish-descended) country only in being *more so*. The tourist from the Central Highlands could imagine him or herself in Andalusia when touring the province. Travel in Guanacaste offered both foreign exoticism and familiar complacency.

La Marimba and "El Punto"

Just how wide was the range of cultural practices that could be safely embraced within the discourse of Guanacaste's archaic "purity"? At the start of the 1930s, those charged with the mission of civilizing Guanacastecan youth were certainly not ready to embrace the marimba—a musical instrument similar to the xylophone, developed in Mexico and Central America from likely African origins and long popular among the Guanacastecan lower classes—as a positive cultural element. Indeed some non-Guanacastecan schoolteachers considered the marimba not only an instrument of a low "spiritual value" but one that incited drunkenness, prostitution, and racial degeneration.[90]

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[89] "Conoce usted Guanacaste…?," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 1 and 4; "Editorial: Guanacaste está llamado a ser el centro de atracción del turismo criollo y extranjero," *El Guanacaste*, October 8, 1936, 1; "Veraneo en Guanacaste," *El Guanacaste*, January 20, 1936, 1.

[90] For instance, faced with a cholera epidemic in January 1867, the government prohibited meetings, the use of marimba, or any other public entertainment, in order to avoid celebrations and gatherings in the province. See ANCR Municipal 4129, f. 27v.

The director of a Guanacastecan school sent a letter to the Ministry of Education drawing the government's attention to the difficulty of his mission of musical civilization as long as the only musical instrument available to students was the marimba:[91]

> Aquí donde la *marimba*, (único instrumento de uso), evoca el deseo de la embriaguez, vicio que lo mismo se ha apoderado de la mujer que del hombre; aquí, donde la prostitución va degenerando la raza al extremo que el número de anormales es algo alarmante en los primeros grados; aquí, donde la carencia de todo imposibilita al maestro ordinario para hacer ameno su trabajo; aquí donde hay tanta pobreza y tan mala alimentación… es indispensable el maestro de música… Sobre todo, los maestros que hemos trabajado en esas escuelas de interior podemos lamentar esta obscuridad en que viven los niños del Guanacaste… Qué caridad se hace enseñando a cantar a estos huerfanitos de la belleza. ¡Qué placer se les da haciéndoles oír un violín![92]

According to this educator, the marimba's rhythmic chimes evoked sexual vice and the degeneration of the race; the poor students urgently needed an opportunity to listen to the superior and civilizing sounds of a violin.

Yet within few years, La Casa activists and the editors of *El Guanacaste* began to create a very different image of the marimba, celebrating Guanacastecan regional particularity by embracing the marimba as an instrument of native origin: perhaps originated in pre-Hispanic Mexico, but appropriated and adapted by pre-Hispanic Nicoyans. The actual origin of the marimba is still a matter of debate today; the emerging consensus is that it arrived at Central America with African slaves in the

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[91] The authorship of the letter is not known, as it was published as part of a column of "several authors," edited and sent to the primary schoolteacher periodical, *El Maestro*, by the Technical Director of Music of the Ministry of Education, José Daniel Zúñiga, who had participated in an official expedition to collect compositions of Guanacastecan popular music, organized by the Secretary of Education in 1928. "Música guanacasteca," *Diario de Costa Rica*, February 1, 1929, 13, 2ª parte; *Diario de Costa Rica*, March 5, 1929, 6; *Diario de Costa Rica*, 12 marzo 1929, 2. See also Maria Clara Vargas, *De las fanfarrias a las salas de concierto: música en Costa Rica, 1840-1940* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica – Asociación Pro-Historia Centroamericana, 2004), 125-126.

[92] "La música en las escuelas," *El Maestro*, July 15, 1928, 445-446.

sixteenth century. In the mid-1930s, however, enthused Guanacastecan poets depicted the marimba as a particularly Guanacastecan—or Chorotegan—instrument, and poems devoted to the marimba became frequent on the pages of *El Guanacaste*. Joaquín Salazar Solórzano, for instance, composed a poem celebrating the marimba as an instrument originally from pre-Hispanic Mexico and brought to Nicoya by the Chorotega:

La Marimba[93]

Marimba que fuiste en otras edades,
gala de festines y de regios bailes
de indianos palacios.

Entones tu ritmo
era delicado para los oídos;
y sobre las tablas
golpeaba el guerrero,
que músico y poeta
buscaba en las notas el ritmo propicio.

Si era para el baile
o para el festin,
habias arpegios de suaves matices
que inspiraban luego
romances de amor
a todos los hijos de mi padre el sol.

Si para la guerra
una marcha indiana rompía los aires,
que el acorde paso del triunfo marcaba
haciendo vibrar la roja bandera
de toda mi raza; la que en las cruzadas
ningún pueblo extraño pudo avasallar.

Múltiple Marimba…
que con Montezuma y Nethulcoyol
dignas epopeyas hubiste de América;
pero en el olvido donde yaces hoy
sólo de amuleto sirves a mi pueblo.

[93] "La Marimba," *El Guanacaste*, January 10, 1936, 3.

Resto de una raza que fué grande y noble,
que luchó con zaña por su libertad,
que tuvo guerreros ágiles y bravos
que al morir vengaban la sangre vertida
que de sus hermanos, el cruel invasor
iba por la tierra dejando de escarnio.

Hoy, parece que penas,
parece que quieres volar las cadenas
y escuchar de nuevo
los gritos de guerra de la tribu indígena
donde fuiste Reina,
las voces salvajes de las montañas
y el golpear monótono de los tambores.

Si es así, ya sabes;
cuando llegue el día de la redención,
estos pueblos jóvenes de América Indígena
cuya madre España tanto maltrató,
irán nuevamente a teñir con sangre
las tierras ubérrimas del Continente
que sus visabuelos supieron honrar.

Mas si la perfidia
se posesionase de los corazones
de buenos guerreros llenos de ambiciones,
el hierro termine de una vez con ellos
para que de freno
sirva a los demás.

Marimba del indio
que habitó mi tierra,
que supo del fuego
que mató Caciques,
que arruinó plantíos,
que incendió cabañas
y sembró el terror.

El alma del indio
que fué el Emperador,
vaga por sus dominios pesarosa
con celos de su inmenso poderío
y batallones de flacos espectros
oscilando en el espacio silenciosos
velan por ti, con desmedido empeño,
Marimba del indio,

múltiple Marimba…
pues gustan de oír lo que en otros siglos
oyeron mejor.

Representing the marimba as an instrument of pre-Hispanic origin, first played by the Aztec nobles and warriors, Guanacastecan poets claimed it epitomized Guanacaste's true indigenous heritage and expressed the essence of Guanacastecan character and culture. Theirs was a native marimba, one that vented the sorrow and suffering of a persecuted—and long-vanished—race, as in a 1936 poem by Francisco Faerron that ended with the following words:

Prodigio de una raza perseguida,
Que el teclado imprimió su sufrimiento,
Cual eco de la selva, en que escondida,
Las voces moduló de este instrumento.[94]

The marimba was the principal musical instrument used in popular celebrations in Guanacaste in the nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, and it was the marimba that accompanied popular dances such as *El Punto guanacasteco.*[95] Initially, as with the marimba, national and foreign visitors did not appreciate El Punto. According to the report of the presidential visit to Guanacaste in 1908, when the delegation saw local people dancing El Punto, they decided to teach polka, waltz, mazurka, and other foreign rhythms to the women while their husbands and partners were off cutting wood for the

[94] See for example, F. Faerron, "La marimba guanacasteca," *El Guanacaste,* August 18, 1936, 10. See also Gustavo Duarte, "Marimba Guanacasteca," *El Guanacaste,* December 25, 1938, 10. The marimba inspired Gustavo Duarte to write in 1950 a poem titled "La Marimba Chorotega," celebrating the marimba as a native musical instrument from Guanacaste. In the poems of Duarte, the Indians were disappeared inhabitants of Guanacaste, defeated in the "struggle between races." *Costa Rica de ayer y hoy* 1, no. 2 (April-May 1950).

[95] For example, Henry Pittier observed in 1896 that the guitar and the marimba always accompanied popular celebrations in Guanacaste. Pittier in Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste,* 306-308.

presidential steamboat.[96] Even earlier, in the 1860s, German traveler and scientist Karl von Seebach had observed popular celebration and dances in the town of Cañas:

> Aunque *los toros* (un simulacro de toros) habían concluido ya, los bailes y la borrachera continuaban. La música original de la marimba se oyó en la Plaza, y en un galerón ancho, abierto por todos lados, los zambos bailaron sus bailes nacionales poco decentes. Al mismo tiempo un negro jamaicano bailaba un solo al son de las castañuelas y en medio de los gritos de alegría de los espectadores.[97]

According to von Seebach, all of the people celebrating in Cañas were of self-evident African origin. Those enthusiastically executing their "national dances" he called *zambos*, that is, Spanish-speakers of mixed African and indigenous ancestry: in other words, members of the same racially designated ethnic group that had accounted for 85% of the populace of Guanacaste (and 100% of the population of Cañas) when the last colonial census was taken two generations earlier.[98] And what of the "Jamaican black" boldly performing a solo to the rhythm of castanets? Although large-scale migration of Jamaicans and other British West Indians to Costa Rica's Caribbean coast did not begin until the 1870s, there were multiple routes by which an English-speaker of African ancestry might have reached Cañas in the 1860s. Von Seebach's dancer might have traveled westward from the Atlantic coasts of Nicaragua or Honduras, or northward along the coast from Panama City, where thousands of Jamaican railroad workers had found

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[96] "El viaje a la frontera," *Páginas Ilustradas* 5, no. 183, February 2, 1908.

[97] Seebach visited Guanacaste in 1864. Meléndez, *Viajeros por Guanacaste,* 220.

[98] See statistics and sources in Table 1.1 in Chapter 1, above.

themselves unemployed upon the completion of the Panama Railroad in 1855.[99] In any case, Seebach's observation offers additional support for Luis Ferrero's argument that El Punto is strongly influenced by African rhythms, and further reason to question the still widely accepted idea that El Punto is a dance of Spanish origin.[100] The reality is that any cultural form embraced and sustained by the nineteenth-century Guanacastecan populace was by definition sustained and recreated by communities of African ancestry, whatever the cultural form's initial point(s) of origin. That von Seebach openly acknowledged this in the 1860s, and that Guanacastecan intellectuals so thoroughly forgot it in the 1930s, tells us a great deal about those intellectuals' ideological needs and related blind spots.

Along with the attention to specific Guanacastecan popular cultural practices like the marimba and El Punto, in the 1930s the province as a whole began to be imagined as a land of continuous popular celebrations and spontaneous parties. Just as inhabitants of the region of Karelia in eastern Finland came to be depicted as the sunny side of the Finnish national character, Guanacastecans began to be portrayed as joyful people, always were looking for an opportunity to have a party and dance. Like the Karelians, who were considered more social, friendly, and curious than Finns, Guanacastecans were represented as lovers of music and composers of beautiful songs.[101]

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[99] Elizabeth MacLean Petras, *Jamaican Labor Migration: White Capital and Black Labor, 1850-1930* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1988); Edmund Gordon, *Disparate Diasporas: Identity and Politics in an African Nicaraguan Community* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).

[100] See "Fecunda rebeldía," *Semanario Universidad*, December 12, 2003, http://semanario.ucr.ac.cr/ediciones2003/M12Diciembre_2003/1555_DIC11/cultura.html as of November 10, 2005. An example of the construction of El Punto as a dance of mixed Andalusan and Chorotega origin, see Napoleón Cruz, "Guanacaste, tierra de alegría," *El Guanacaste*, August 20, 1939, 3. Guanacastecan researchers have recently affirmed El Punto as "la danza más popular de la región y en la que se precibe con mayor énfasis la influencia española…." Wagner Moreno Moreno and Rosa Rosales Ortiz, "Programa Guanacaste hoy. Avance de Investigación: Santa Cruz: cuna del folclor, la arena, el sol y el mar," (Universidad de Costa Rica, Vicerrectoría de Investigación, 1994), 90.

What von Seebach characterized as the "indecent national dance" of *zambos* and Jamaicans, came in the 1930s to be considered representative of Guanacastecan music and culture, and was converted from rural popular entertainment into a folkloric presentation to amuse audiences in metropolitan theaters. Guanacastecan lower classes still danced El Punto in the mid 1930s, though it was progressively abandoned as a popular dance. On stage, however, it was ever more common, as the marimba and El Punto—which had hardly been the only popular rhythm in the province—became essential symbols of Guanacastecan identity marketed in the capital city and other Central Highland towns. So successful was this marketing and appropriation that these two elements of popular culture would be converted into the national symbols of a newly populist state, in the second half of the twentieth century.[102]

"Guanacastecan Character:" Litanies for the Subaltern

El Guanacaste began its work as promoter of regionalism by announcing that certain characteristics of Guanacastecans encouraged rifts among people and localities inside the province. According to the editorial, Guanacastecans were undisciplined and impulsive people, because of the heavy imprint untamed nature had in their psychology. It was time to modify these bad habits:

> Hora es ya de que disciplinemos y orientemos mejor los impulsos ardorosos que han impreso en nuestra psicología la naturaleza exuberante, el ambiente tropical de aquella región. La vehemencia desbordante y

[101] Maunu Häyrynen, "A Periphery Lost: Representations of Karelia in Finnish National Landscape Imagery," *Fennia* 182, no. 1 (2004): 23-32.

[102] La Casa de Guanacaste inaugurated this practice of performances and demonstrations of Guanacastecan culture, especially music and dance, in a ball in December 1935, when a Marimba band "Filadelfia" and other Guanacastecan musicians performed rhythms and dances considered "regional," including the "electrifying" El Pavo and El Punto. *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1936, 4. The dance called El Pavo never reached the popularity of El Punto.

> descontrolada, semejante a las impetuosas crecientes del Tempisque, y nuestra conformidad musulmana, han sido quizás, las causas principales de las insensatas divisiones y rivalidades estériles, las cuales han servido para que nuestras propias fuerzas se anulen entre sí y para que la provincia haya vivido en un estancamiento deplorable.[103]

According to Salvador Villar, author of the editorial, the rivalries between localities reflected the unavoidably passionate human response to the vigor of nature in the province. If their nature-imposed character conspired against their common goals, they had to be conscious of those natural forces and stop being uncontrolled, impulsive, undisciplined, and jealous of the fellow provincials. Doing oddly little to modulate Guanacastecans' climate-driven tempestuosity was the "Muslim conformity" apparently bequeathed by those conveniently swarthy Andalusian ancestors. Guanacastecans had to be aware of the burdensome influence of nature and heritage in their character and behavior, and try to overcome it through conscious efforts to unite and work for the province and the country, in order to elevate the culture and material wealth of all.[104]

El Guanacaste elaborated at length on the specific "Guanacastecan character" in its first years of circulation, publishing normative appreciations of human characteristics that were supposed to honor the region and the regionalist movement. In 1936, the newspaper published instructions on how to become a good Guanacastecan.[105] The column, entitled "Letanías," caused a strong impact on some readers, who wrote enthusiastic letters to the editor praising the author of the column. [106] Addressed to the

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[103] Salvador Villar, "Párrafos editoriales," *El Guanacaste*, January 1, 1935, 1.

[104] Ibid.

[105] "Letanías," *El Guanacaste*, January 10, 1936, 1, 4.

[106] Clímaco Álvarez, "Felicitación de un buen comprovinciano," *El Guanacaste*, February 1, 1936, 1.

Guanacastecan poor, the agricultural workers and other subaltern classes of the province, at a time when their lives and working conditions were already hard, and getting harder, "Letanías" provided instructions on how to be a "good Guanacastecan" and how to cultivate "Guanacastecan pride." It instructed its reader to "be a man," to work without complaining about the weather or the harshness of the toil:

> El guanacasteco es y debe ser un trabajador vigoroso a quien no arredra ni la lluvia, ni la tempestad, ni el sol que tuesta y curte su piel, ni las múltiples peligrosas faenas de la llanura o de la montaña. El guanacasteco es hombre![107]

According to "Letanías," Guanacastecans enjoyed and cherished freedom, which could seem contradictory given that they were supposed to avoid laziness and work hard without complaining in the fields and other hacienda activities. A Guanacastecan was to be humble, without great desires, because that was honorable for him:

> La sobriedad ha de distinguir a la gente guanacasteca. Nada de apetitos desbordantes: parco en el comer, moderado o abstinente en las bebidas alcohólicas que envenenan lentamente la materia y el espíritu, sobrio en sus placeres a los cuales nunca debe darle rienda suelta hasta debocarse en los escollos del abuso. Si, guanacasteco, dominio, dominio para las pasiones![108]

The Guanacastecan also had to be honest and avoid hypocrisy. He was not to expect others to help him; he had to reach happiness on his own, and feel satisfaction about his life. Dissatisfaction was acceptable only when comparing life in Guanacaste with the other provinces' way of life; Guanacastecans had the right to pursue improvement in their everyday life, indeed the *duty* to ask why the inhabitants of other provinces had the right to travel on paved roads, while Guanacastecans endured poor

[107] "Letanías," *El Guanacaste*, January 10, 1936, 1.

[108] Ibid.

roads of mud and dust.[109] "Letanías" instructed Guanacastecans to not abandon farming, to be good horse riders, and to study—or, at least, to learn how to read—, and gave a list of names of educated Guanacastecans who were to be emulated and followed.[110] At the same time, "Letanías" recommended that Guanacastecan cowboys (*sabanero*) not envy Argentine gauchos or North American cowboys, but take pride in their own abilities to withstand hard work and search for perfection in their daily duties.[111] Guanacastecans were to be humble, unsophisticated, and not to look for luxuries or good clothing. To despise the provincial songs and dances would be an unpardonable crime; instead of imitating others, Guanacastecans were to promote their folklore, as other countries did with their representative dances:

> Argentina tiene su tango, Colombia su pasillo, Chile la cueca, Cuba la rumba, el joropo Venezuela, España la jota, malagueñas y peleneras, y México exalta en todo sentido la tradición indígena. No seáis, guanacastecos, serviles imitadores de lo ajeno, sin poseer nada propio, nada criollo. Revive el punto, el matuteado, el acuartillado, el pavo, la simpatia, el coyotito, etc.[112]

Guanacastecans were to be cheerful, to sing and dance even if they had hardship and pain in their everyday lives. "Joviality, Guanacastecan! In the middle of the grief of

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[109] "¿Por qué otros pueblos han de poder viajar por carreteras pavimentadas y vosotros por caminos de lodo, barro y polvo?" *El Guanacaste,* January 10, 1936, 1.

[110] The list included, among others, the following men: Antonio and Ramón Zelaya (lawyer); Francisco Faerron (landowner and congressman); Salvador Villar (governor of the province of Guanacaste); Antonio Alvarez Hurtado (landowner and magistrate); Virgilio Salazar (teacher and writer); Leonidas Briceño (congressman); Juan Tenorio; Fidencio Arias; Aristides Baltodano (landowner and congressman); Francicsco Vargas (physician), Marcelino Canales (teacher), Adán Guevara (teacher), Oscar Ruiz (teacher), Manuel J. Grillo, Jr., and Pablo M. Rodríguez. Ibid., 4.

[111] "Y tú, sabanero de las llanuras guanacastecas, no tengas nada que envidiar al gaucho de las pampas argentinas ni al cow boy norteamericano. Bueno vaquero, buen jornalero, buen hachero, buen artesano, por en tu trabajo y en tu oficio toda el alma, todo el espíritu de perfección que caracteriza tu obra. No hagas nunca mal hechas las cosas, guanacasteco!" Ibid.

[112] Ibid.

life, show yourself spirited, cheerful, agreeable. Sing, sing, sing, and... crush with your song the grief and the pains."[113] Singing and dancing in spite of grief and pain of everyday life—that was to be Guanacastecan! "Letanías" urged Guanacastecans to be helpful, not to be tricky, always pay their debts, and do their duty for the Fatherland: both Costa Rica—*la patria chica*—and Central America—*la patria grande*.

The Guanacastecan also was to be a **macho**, usually *sabanero*, or *peón*, but definitely a hard-working man. The *sabanero* was becoming the symbol of the province, and would later become an object of scholarly studies. Marc Edelman has suggested the *sabanero* cult was originally created to boost pride in hacienda work, because that was the only effective way of holding workers on the ranches before the economic crisis of the mid 1930s. Forced labor was not functional in Costa Rica as it was on Nicaraguan ranches, and thus it was necessary to use other means to attract a labor force. "Sabanero pride" did not exist in a similar sense in Nicaragua. Edelman's explanation is also supported by a 1869 governmental report in which the governor of Guanacaste called for special laws for Guanacaste in order to make the practically "nomadic" people—as the governor put it—work on the haciendas instead of wandering around hunting and fishing.[114]

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[113] "Jovialidad, guanacasteco! En medio de los Dolores de la vida, muéstrate animoso, alegre, placentero. Canta, canta, canta, y... apabulla con tu canto los pesares y las penas." Ibid.

[114] In 1869, Governor of Guanacaste Victor Guardia declared in his report to the central government that laws had to be adapted to the particularities of the province. He had tried to force "the proletarian class" by circulars to work in haciendas, but it was difficult to control the "almost nomadic" population outside of towns and villages. The governor asked for an "extension" of the vagrancy laws in order make people work. See Costa Rica, *Informe del Secretario de Estado, departamentos de Guerra, Marina, Gobernación, Fomento y Justicia, presentado al Congreso Nacional de Costa Rica en 1867 (a 1869)*, ANCR Congreso 29978, 101.

In social terms, then, Guanacaste was imagined and constructed by Guanacastecan and other intellectuals as a place where hard working and happy *sabaneros* (and other agricultural laborers) spent their days singing, playing and dancing in spite of their harsh labor conditions. In this vision, the hard work in the fields and herding cattle became a diversion and celebration in which Guanacastecan *machos* eagerly participated and which they enjoyed. This ideological construct was not a new one—foreign travelers had described playful life on the haciendas since the second half of the nineteenth century—but it was incorporated into the regional identity in the making in a new way. This is an example of what the scholars of nationalism have called the *invention of tradition*. The promoters of Guanacastecan regionalism picked out certain aspects of subalterns' everyday lives, coloring and turning them into essential personality traits and cultural characteristics of the entire region. Their "recognition" of Guanacastecan poor as essentially and unshakably joyful was accepted even by those who, in principle, were worried about the miserable living and working conditions of the laborers and *sabaneros.* Minos Gracel (pseudonym) wrote in 1936:

> Peones y sabaneros, son felices, aunque sufran en sus sistema de vivir. Cantan, bailan, corren en sus caballos de aquí y de allá y enamoran, con singular procedimiento, a las morenas más chispeantes. Pareciera, que hay en ellos, conformidad cristiana, sumisión impenetrable, a ese modo de vivir, que no es ni vida, ni muerte.[115]

This author expressed both admiration and pity for *sabaneros* and agrarian workers. These estimable, miserable working people spent their days in "impenetrable submission" and endured a life that was "neither life nor death." Educated middle-class activists' concern for poor Guanacastecans exuded condescension, together with a hint of

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[115] "El peón y el sabanero," *El Guanacaste*, April 10, 1936, 3.

self-congratulation over the authors' own vision and values. This heady, volatile mixture helped fuel regionalists' electoral foray, yet did not prove an enduring source of power.

El Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca and the Discourse of Dr. Vargas

The Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca—also called Partido Unión y Confraternidad Guanacasteca—was founded in 1937. It enjoyed relative success in the 1938 electoral campaign, and to many militants and observers seemed to be on its way to becoming an important political force nationwide. Yet after 1939 it quickly faded from the electoral scene. The Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca has not been an attractive topic for political historians in Costa Rica, not even for those dedicated to the history of political parties. Perhaps this is because research on political history in Costa Rica has been done from the perspective of the center of the country, and with the presumption that the only political organizations that really matter in Costa Rican history are the Central Valley parties, instead of trying to examine national politics from regional, provincial, or local perspectives.[116] Seen from Guanacaste, the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca played an important role in the politics of the late 1930s; it was able to mobilize wide masses of Guanacastecan poor, the middle sectors, and even some of the landowning sectors, generating great expectations—especially in the lower classes—and fears—in the provincial and national power holding groups. Nevertheless, party leader Francisco Vargas Vargas's dream of creating a broad cross-class political movement was never realized.

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[116] Carlos Dávila's research on the leader of Confraternidad Guanacasteca, Francisco Vargas Vargas, carried out in the 1970s on the basis of oral sources and newspapers, is the only existing historical study of this regionalist political party and its leader. Carlos Dávila Cubero, ¡*Viva Vargas! Historia del Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca* (San José, Costa Rica: Ediciones Guayacán, 1987). Meanwhile, only the 1948 civil war has generated studies of rural participants's experiences, based on oral histories.

Carlos Dávila has identified three distinct sectors of sympathizers and militants of the Confraternidad Guanacasteca Party. First, there was the middle class (professionals, merchants, and medium-size farmers), young up-and-comers eager to break the limits imposed by the local *hacendado* oligarchies. They were the most active members and leaders of the party. The second sector consisted of two groups of landowners: those who, without being activists, financially supported the party; and those great landowners or other figures who had been losing their influence in the provincial or local level, and had decided to join the movement out of opportunist considerations.[117] The third sector, according to Dávila, were the "fanatical" followers from the ranks of the poor: day laborers, *sabaneros*, domestic workers, cart drivers, poor farmers, and other lower class and working people.[118]

Most of the traditional landowners and *hacendados* of Guanacaste never gave their support to the party. In times of intensifying social conflict in the province, *hacendados* were suspicious of party militants' emphasis on the growing levels of exploitation among Guanacaste's poor. Only the party's demands for public works for the province drew active support from landowning elites, who desperately needed roads to transport their products to Central Highland markets. As we have seen, *hacendados* and their representatives frequently published columns in *El Guanacaste*, participating in

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[117] I would add to this group the few representatives of the "nouveau riche" in Guanacaste, as the case of Francisco Cubillo Incer, who did not come from the traditional landowner families of Guanacaste. He was originally a poor Nicaraguan immigrant, who managed to create impressive fortune in the province and become "the owner of Filadelfia" by the mid-1920s. For more detailed information on Cubillo Incer, see Marc Edelman, "Don Chico y el diablo: dimensiones de etnia, clase y género en las narrativas campesinas guanacastecas del siglo XX," in *El paso del cometa: estado, política social y culturas populares en Costa Rica, 1800-1950*, edited by Iván Molina and Steven Palmer (San José, Costa Rica: Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies and Editorial Porvenir, 1994).

[118] Dávila, *¡Viva Vargas!*, 59-60.

the promotion of regionalism and invoking the classic claims of provincial abandonment to legitimate their own need for roads and railroads.[119] In sharp contrast, practically no subaltern voices appeared directly in *El Guanacaste*, the organ of the political movement, even as the poor classes came to be considered the social base of the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca. It is remarkably difficult to find testimony describing the participation of the lower classes—or their decision not to participate—in the regionalist political movement. The party militants most visible in available sources are all from the middle-class sectors: intellectuals, farmers, merchants, and, especially, educators. It was they who sat on the editorial board and wrote most in *El Guanacaste*, and it was they who spearheaded the regionalist movement's leap into electoral politics.

The Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca was registered as an electoral party in June 1937, and its first convention was in Llano Grande of San Miguel in December 1937.[120] Between 2500 and 5000 people attended the meeting to elect the party's candidates for the national elections.[121] The first candidate for Congress was Francisco Vargas Vargas (medical doctor), and the other three were Lisímaco Leiva Cubillo, Hernán Vargas (farmer), and Adán Guevara Centeno (primary school teacher).[122] The Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca participated in three electoral campaigns: the mid-term congressional elections of 1938; the presidential and congressional elections of

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[119] See for example Francisco Faerron, "Carretera panamericana I," *El Guanacaste*, March 1, 1936, 1.

[120] According to Dávila, the first General Assembly of the party was held in July 1937. Dávila, *¡Viva Vargas!*, 71.

[121] Dávila states that even more might have attended the meeting. Ibid., 61.

[122] "La gran convención," *El Guanacaste*, December 5, 1937, 1.

1940; and the mid-term congressional elections of 1942.[123] When Vargas Vargas began his campaign in Guanacaste, in most of the places where he was supposed to speak the meetings were prohibited or systematically disrupted by local representatives of national authorities or other sympathizers of the official party (Partido Republicano Nacional).[124] *El Guanacaste* and other newspapers documented the tense electoral campaign in Guanacaste, showing a very different face of local political culture from the official accounts of peacefulness and civilized character of the Costa Rican democracy.

Francisco Vargas Vargas was born into a landowner family in Carrillo, Guanacaste in 1909. He had been interested in politics since childhood, his first writings published in newspapers when he was ten years old.[125] He graduated as a medical doctor from the Sorbonne, and in 1935 began to work in the Hospital San Juan de Dios in the capital city San José.[126] However, a serious clash with his superiors made Dr. Vargas leave his position in the hospital in May 1936, and he departed for Guanacaste declaring that he was leaving for his province, following his heart's will to serve his fellow provincials and humanity.[127] By the time of the founding of the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca in December 1937 and the first electoral campaign, Dr. Vargas had already become known as an excellent doctor, one who usually attended poor patients for free and who traveled the entire province teaching the rural poor to read and write. Thus,

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[123] Dávila, *¡Viva Vargas!*, 83.

[124] Ibid., 77.

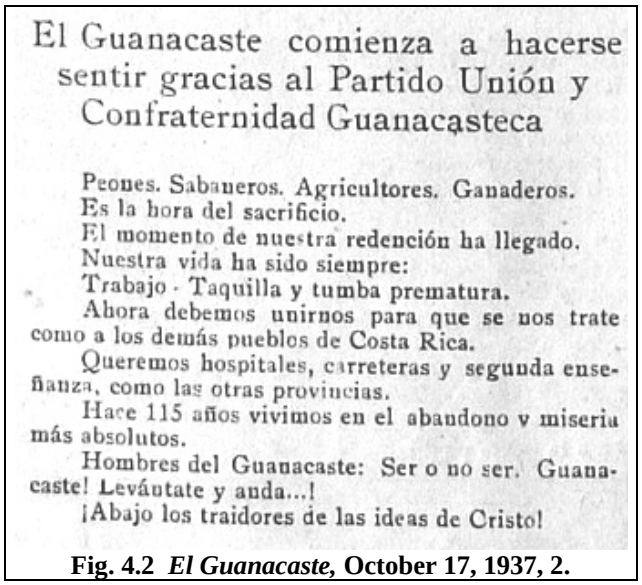
[125] According to Carlos Dávila, at the age of ten Vargas already was writing articles in *La Prensa Libre*. Ibid., 41.

[126] "La incorporación del Dr. Francisco Vargas V.," *El Guanacaste*, December 1, 1935, 1.

[127] He performed an emergency operation while off duty, which led his superiors at the Hospital San Juan de Dios to admonish him. *El Guanacaste*, May 20, 1936, 1.

already before the foundation of the political party and the beginning of the official electoral campaign, Dr. Vargas had been constantly present on the pages of *El Guanacaste.* The editorial board of the newspaper provided him active support, and when the moment of political organization came, Vargas had spontaneously become *the* candidate of the Confraternidad Guanacasteca.

Dr. Vargas inaugurated his campaign calling Guanacastecans to accompany him "at the hour of sacrifice," as the moment of their "redemption" had come. The ad in *El Guanacaste* addressed itself to day laborers, cowboys, farmers, and cattle ranchers alike using biblical language. Vargas Vargas compared himself with Christ, promising redemption for all Guanacastecans, subalterns and elites. For one hundred and fifteen years the province had been deserted by the central government, and now it was time to stand up and take an action: "Down with the traitors of Christ!" The main characteristics of Dr. Vargas's political discourse were featured in a paid announcement for the party, denouncing the suffering of Guanacastecans as an exploited class and as inhabitants of a province kicked out of the wagon of modernization. (Fig. 4.2)



El Guanacaste comienza a hacerse sentir gracias al Partido Unión y Confraternidad Guanacasteca

Peones. Sabaneros. Agricultores. Ganaderos.
Es la hora del sacrificio.
El momento de nuestra redención ha llegado.
Nuestra vida ha sido siempre:
Trabajo - Taquilla y tumba prematura.
Ahora debemos unirnos para que se nos trate como a los demás pueblos de Costa Rica.
Queremos hospitales, carreteras y segunda enseñanza, como las otras provincias.
Hace 115 años vivimos en el abandono y miseria más absolutos.
Hombres del Guanacaste: Ser o no ser. Guanacaste! Levántate y anda...!
¡Abajo los traidores de las ideas de Cristo!

Fig. 4.2 *El Guanacaste,* October 17, 1937, 2.

Vargas's denunciations of poverty and calls for collective redemption could be heard as dangerously radical. Even before being elected as Confraternidad Guanacasteca's primary candidate, Vargas was constantly accused of being a communist. In October 1937, Vargas declared that he would not answer personal accusations while the destiny of 67,000 people was "at stake," because, after 115 years as Costa Rican citizens, Guanacastecans continued living without a hospital, roads, or high schools. Vargas seems to have truly believed that he could single-handedly redeem all Guanacastecans from a century of discrimination and abandonment. Rejecting accusations that he agitated the lower classes against the province's wealthy, Vargas displayed telegrams of support he had received from rich Guanacastecans, hacienda owners, and intellectuals. For example, he published one that stated: "Those who say that you or your companions try to incite to rebellion *peones* against the employers are lying. We, as much as the *peones*, enthusiastically embrace the cause of 'Guanacastecan Fraternity and Union,' the defense and salvation of this province." Nine people signed the telegram, and Vargas added his commentary: "Note: All those who signed in their majority are *finqueros* [landowners]. Among them is one of the strongest capitalists of Guanacaste, Don Francisco Cubillo Incer."[128] Vargas publicized several other telegrams from prosperous Guanacastecans, including ones from affluent ladies, to suggest that if the wealthy people were supporting him he could not possibly be a communist. Vargas called himself a Christian Socialist, and affirmed that he had developed clear political

[128] Cubillo Incer was one of the largest suppliers of young bulls for the Central Valley cattle market, providing between 1 and 3% of the total amount of national cattle during the period from 1920 to 1948. See Marc Edelman, "Don Chico y el diablo," 112-113.

ideas by the age of twelve (some of his writings from that age were published when he was fifteen), when there was no communism in Costa Rica:

> Nunca he leído a Karl Max [sic]. Pero mi profesión de médico, la cual he tratado de santificar con un verdadero apostolado, me ha permitido palpar tantas miserias, iniquidades e injusticias, como se cometen, no sólo con los menesterosos, sino también con los que tienen dinero abusando de su ignorancia Clamar justicia para ese conglomerado social, como para los médicos que estamos dispuestos a tomar el bueno camino de la ética profesional, no es cosa que adolezca de extremismo alguno.[129]

Rejecting the charge of communism, Vargas explained his convictions instead in terms of his profession as a medical doctor, one who had observed misery and injustice,[130] and again compared himself with Christ: "Electing me as deputy is not a favor to me. I am sacrificing my life, my work and resources for this cause, the same cause for which Christ died 1937 years ago."[131] On the same page as this response, *El Guanacaste* published a separate essay asking those who called Dr. Vargas a communist and agitator to show evidence of where hate and class struggle could be found in his organization. According to the author, it was impossible to find that of evidence, because so many different social sectors were involved in the party as activists and followers: agriculturists, cattle dealers, and industrialists representing large capital; small farmers and proprietors; middle-class people, workers, women and *sabaneros*.[132] As should be

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[129] "No soy comunista. Soy Socialista Cristiano," *El Guanacaste,* October 17, 1937, 5, 6.

[130] The phenomenon of "medical populism" was common to many Latin American countries in the 1920s and 1930s, as leading physicians-politicians sought to study the poor population's health conditions and to take reformist measures when in power. Salvador Allende had lived in the slums of Santiago as a medical student in the late 1920s. Other examples of powerful physician-politicians were Arnulfo Arias in Panamá; Ramón Grau San Martín in Cuba, and Juscelino Kubitschek in Brazil. Steven Palmer, *From popular medicine to medical populism: doctors, healers, and public power in Costa Rica, 1800-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 218-219.

[131] "No soy comunista. Soy Socialista Cristiano," *El Guanacaste,* October 17, 1937, 6.

amply clear, the language of the electoral campaign of Dr. Vargas was intimately linked to the discourse of the broader regionalist movement represented by La Casa and *El Guanacaste*. The strongest commonality was the language of class reconciliation, which prevailed in Dr. Vargas's electoral discourse and in the declarations, columns, and opinions of the regionalist publicists, independently of their specific political position.

Recurrent violent incidents marked the Party's first electoral campaign, and the central government ended up sending troops to Guanacaste a few days before the elections to "guarantee order" in the province. It also sent the Red Cross in case of trouble.[133] In spite of the violent environment and electoral fraud, the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca did surprisingly well in the mid-term congressional elections of February 1938, managing to get one deputy—Dr. Vargas—elected to Congress for the period of 1938-1942. The electoral fraud caused bitterness among party leaders and followers. However, they celebrated the success of Dr. Vargas, declaring, "The *caudillo* of the *Pampa*, Doctor Vargas, broke the dike that had protected flimsy so-called leaders and loafing politicians in Guanacaste for more than one hundred years." (Fig. 4.3)

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[132] Ibid.

[133] "Según la 'Prensa Libre' del 25 de enero, el Gobierno va a mandar al Guanacaste, una brigada de primeros auxilios en prevención de posibles incidentes…" *El Guanacaste*, February 6, 1938, 1; "La hora se aproxima," *El Guanacaste*, February 13, 1938, 1.

EL CAUDILLO DE LAS PAMPAS DOCTOR VARGAS ROMPIO

el dique que durante más de cien años había conservado figurones improvisados y

POLITICOS BRIBONES EN EL GUANACASTE

El Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca ha triunfado en toda la línea, pues bien se comprende que la fuerza de un Gobierno, que cuenta con todos los recursos del Poder, dentro del régimen legalista dentro del cual se mueve también la institución del sufragio, se aprovecha de todos los recursos propios al servicio de la causa que se desea llevar al triunfo.

Fig. 4.3 ***El Guanacaste*****, February 27, 1938, 1.**

In the front-page engraving that decorated the post-electoral *El Guanacaste*, the victorious leader Vargas is drawn as a *macho* cowboy on horseback with a gun of

considerable size by his side.[134] The wise-looking horse stands on its back legs, and the *macho* rider Vargas is apparently about to take hold of his gun. In the face of electoral fraud the party had nevertheless won in Guanacaste, inciting euphoria and expectations in its followers and militants. Even as party leaders denounced the fraud they insisted had lowered their vote totals, they themselves seemed a bit taken aback by Vargas's success.

It would not last. In the subsequent elections (1940, 1944, 1946, and 1948) the Confraternidad Guanacasteca did not win a single congressional seat.[135] In 1938, the party received 5.4% of the total number of votes at the national level; in 1942, only 2.5%.[136] In the presidential elections of 1940, Confraternidad Guanacasteca still received 5.8% of votes nationally, 2.3% corresponding to votes from the province of Guanacaste. But in that same year, official party presidential candidate Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia—another medical doctor—received 84.3% of the votes of all people entitled to vote in Costa Rica, 8.2% of the total number of votes corresponding to Guanacastecans supporting Calderón Guardia.[137] Three-and-a-half times as many Guanacastecans voted for Dr. Calderón Guardia, in other words, as voted for Dr. Vargas Vargas, who was supposed to be the candidate of the province. After that, the party practically disappeared from the national electoral scene. What seemed an incredible success story for a new regionalist party in 1938 became a mere footnote to Costa Rican political history; this

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[134] The illustration is remarkable given that during the electoral campaign Dr. Vargas had fallen from horseback, seriously damaging his spinal column. He underwent lengthy operations and periods of treatment in the United States, and never completely recovered from these injuries. Davila, 45.

[135] Jorge Mario Salazar Mora, *Crisis liberal y estado reformista: análisis político-electoral (1914-1949)* 1st ed., Colección Historia de Costa Rica (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial de la Universidad de Costa Rica, 1995), 316.

[136] Ibid., 317.

[137] Ibid., 202, 313.

was no rising sun of redemption, but a mere shooting star that disappeared before it reached any heights at all.[138]

Meanwhile, those Guanacastecan *hacendados* who made political careers as congressmen did so within the national political parties instead of joining the Confraternidad Guanacasteca. (In their eagerness to attach themselves to the strongest political forces at the center of the country, of course, they continued the pattern of succoring central power that Guanacastecan elites had followed faithfully throughout the nineteenth century, as we saw in Chapter 1.) For example, in the period from 1936 to 1948, four Guanacastecan congressmen (Aristides Baltodano Briceño, Alvaro Cubillo Aguilar, Ramón Leiva Cubillo, and Matías Sobrado García) were from the official party, while only the Confraternidad Guanacasteca representative—Dr. Vargas, in office from 1938 to 1942—stood for the opposition.[139] In spite of Vargas's discourse of cross-class conciliation, the regionalist party was not able to gain the support of the regional power holders who traditionally supported the official party.

Why did the regionalist political party falter so quickly? Why did the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca fail to achieve more in the subsequent elections? Multiple factors contributed, but perhaps the two most important obstacles to the expansion and consolidation of the movement had to do, on the one hand, with the way in which the party built its leadership and, on the other, with the broader political conjuncture in the country in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The party depended on the figure of Dr.

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[138] Already during the presidential campaign in 1939, Dr. Vargas had declared he had no party any more. *El Guanacaste,* September 3, 1939, 3.

[139] Salazar, *Crisis liberal y estado reformista,* 315.

Vargas, seen as the redeemer of the province; no preparation of new party leaders or propaganda for other figures was undertaken. All attention and hopes were fixed on Dr. Vargas, even though after the 1938 campaign it became clear that he was too ill to carry out active political work. In May 1939, the National Assembly approved permission for Deputy Vargas to absent himself from the sessions until he was totally recovered. Once more, Vargas traveled to the U.S. to undergo a difficult surgery, and his followers and the party militants were left waiting for his return.[140] During the crucial moments of the early electoral campaign in 1939, the party was incapable of making decisions in the absence of Vargas.[141] *El Guanacaste* described the atmosphere among the followers of Vargas, who were waiting for their "boss" and remembering the glorious moments of the party's recent past:

> El Guanacaste espera desesperadamente a su Jefe, quien manda la palabra en toda la provincia guanacasteca… El doctor Vargas Vargas vendrá muy pronto a orientarnos bajo una hermosa convención, como la efectuada en el Llano Grande de San Miguel y entonces sabremos cuál va a ser nuestra situación política en el Guanacaste… Esperamos la nueva orientación que nos trae nuestro Jefe del Guanacaste el Dr. Don Francisco Vargas Vargas, para alistar nuestras baterías.[142]

The decision simply to wait until Vargas came back was both damaging in and of itself, and indicative of the underlying problems that hobbled the party in the 1940s. Some leading party militants were well aware of the dangers the moment presented and

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[140] "Permiso indefinido concedió el Congreso al Dr. Vargas hasta su total restablecimiento," *El Guanacaste,* May 14, 1939, 1.

[141] "A un grito de ESPERAMOS AL DR. VARGAS contestan los CONFRATERNOS a los políticos bribones," *El Guanacaste,* May 14, 1939, 2.

[142] Narciso Canales, "El Guanacaste y la política," *El Guanacaste,* May 21, 1939, 2.

yet were unable to do anything without Dr. Vargas: anything other than beg others to save the Confraternidad Guanacasteca, that is.

> Alerta hermanos guanacastecos, no dejemos morir una causa tan noble que con tanto sacrificio, hasta con el de su salud nuestro dignísimo jefe el diputado doctor don Francisco Vargas V. fundara para salvación de nuestra Provincia, de no seguir sirviendo de escala a los políticos bribones, que por tanto tiempo la han escarnecido y humillado. Hoy que por estos mismos motivos nuestro distinguido jefe se encuentra lejos de su madre y familia, sus amigos y de la Patria, recluído en un hospital y soportando un lecho de penas, hoy es cuando La Confraternidad Guanacasteca debe ponerse de pie y sentir vibrar al unisono y de un solo sentimiento darle el respaldo que merece a las palabras ... desde Puerto Limón a los guanacastecos y así como muestra de lealtad y abnegación, a su regreso encuentre luchando como un solo hombre por la liberación de nuestro pueblo. Acordaos que mañana no debemos llorar como mujeres, lo que hoy no quisimos remediar como hombres por la inercia y el abandono.[143]

The euphoria of the 1937 convention and 1938 electoral success was still fresh in the minds of the *Confraternos*, yet, faced with Vargas's indefinite absence, they were incapable of preparing for the 1940 elections.

At a very early stage of that presidential campaign it became clear that the official candidate, Rafael Angel Calderón Guardia, enjoyed an important advantage in the electoral competition. Opposition forces tried to form a united front against him. The opposition—communists, radical intellectuals, supporters of ex-president Ricardo Jiménez, and *Confraternos*—denounced the authoritarianism of the Cortés administration, and, comparing Calderón to Hitler, tried to create a wide coalition to "defend democracy" in the country. In May 1939, the Confraternidad Guanacasteca Party convention decided to support three-time prior president Ricardo Jiménez. *El Guanacaste* opined that by

[143] Jorge R. Caravaca C., "Carta abierta al Comité Provincial de la Confraternidad Guanacasteca en Liberia," *El Guanacaste*, May 14, 1939, 2. Note the author's insistent appeal to *los hombres machos*.

supporting Jiménez, *Confraternidad* showed they were interested not only in the problems of the province of Guanacaste, but in issues nationwide. [144]

The health of Dr. Vargas was worsening; however, he unexpectedly returned to the country in June and called another party convention for July 1939.[145] This time Confraternidad decided to participate in the creation of a new front to fight "against Mussolinism and Hitlerism in Costa Rica" as represented by Calderón Guardia. The Alianza Democrática was presented as a totally new kind of political party ("an ideological party," "the only honest forces of the country"), although its presidential candidate was the sempiternal Ricardo Jiménez. Some *Confraternos* saw the Alianza as the continuation of the struggle their party had carried out in the 1938 elections.[146] Nevertheless, many previous followers of Confraternidad Guanacasteca ended up supporting Calderón Guardia instead, earning harsh reproach from the *Confraterno* leaders. One author in *El Guanacaste* insisted Guanacastecan men must support the Alianza Democrática in order to "honrar la sangre chorotega para salvar la dignidad de los guanacastecos."[147]

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[144] "La convención de la Confraternidad," *El Guanacaste,* May 14, 1939, 2; "La Confraternidad Guanacasteca se DECLARÓ OFICIALMENTE RICARDISTA. Más de 8.000 hombres de la pampa y la montaña respaldan esa decisión," *El Guanacaste,* May 28, 1939, 2.

[145] "Al definirse la Confraternidad por la candidatura de don Ricardo demostró con su actitud que no solamente se interesa por los problemas del Guanacaste, sino también por los problemas nacionales," and "La salud del Doctor Vargas," *El Guanacaste,* June 18, 1939, 1. "El regreso del Dr. Vargas, Jefe de la Confraternidad," *El Guanacaste,* June 25, 1939, 1. Party secretary Oscar Ruiz Centeno reported that Vargas had received an enormous amount of correspondence and it was impossible for him to immediately respond them. "A los amigos y simpatizantes del Doctor Francisco Vargas Vargas," ibid., 2. "Presidida por el Dr. Vargas, en una nueva convención política la Confraternidad Guanacasteca definirá hoy su nuevo rumbo," *El Guanacaste,* July 23, 1939, 1.

[146] "Para que no se engañe más al Pueblo: jugoso y vibrante Manifiesto Político del Dr. Fco. Vargas al país y a la Confraternidad," *El Guanacaste,* August 6, 1939, 1. "La lucha de abnegación y sacrificio iniciada por Alianza Democrática Nacional recuerda la pasada campaña de Confraternidad Guanacasteca," *El Guanacaste,* August 27, 1939, 1. See also Gilberto Canales Rivas, "Las hojas secas varían de dirección con solo un soplo," *El Guanacaste,* August 27, 1939, 2 and 4.

The Alianza Democrática was composed of political groups that knew they would not win the elections, but used the opportunity to educate people and make them more politically conscious.[148] The electoral propaganda of the Alianza denounced Calderón and his party as Hitler in Costa Rica, and decried the authoritarian government's enraged attacks against Dr. Vargas and communist candidate Manuel Mora.[149] The discourse of the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca in this second electoral campaign resembled very little the fervent regionalism displayed in the campaign two years earlier. The demands of the party at that moment were not specially regionalist but had to do with issues of social justice, peoples' rights, and democracy in general.[150] In December, as consequence of the abandonment of the electoral campaign by Ricardo Jiménez's Republican supporters, one more convention was hold in convalescing Dr. Vargas's bedroom.[151] A month later, the Alianza fell apart. Communists reproached *Confraternos* for indirectly aiding the Calderonist party, while the *Confraternos* argued they represented an option for those who did not want to vote for either Calderonism or

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[147] Gilberto Canales Rivas, "Las hojas secas varían de dirección con solo un soplo," *El Guanacaste*, August 27, 1939, 2.

[148] *El Guanacaste*, October 29, 1939, 1 and 4.

[149] "Hechos son amores y no buenas razones," *El Guanacaste*, October 29, 1939, 1 and 4. "El Dr. Vargas y Manuel Mora, blanco de la furia gobiernista," *El Guanacaste*, November 19, 1939, 1.

[150] "Frente a la imposición oficial, se levanta el pueblo dispuesto a defender SUS DERECHOS. Dos partidos encabezarán a los costarricenses que quieren defender sus derechos Confraternidad Gteca y Bloque Obreros y Campesinos." *El Guanacaste*, December 3, 1939, 1. The newspaper published the manifesto of the central committee of the Bloque Obreros y Campesinos.

[151] "Recordamos que la Confraternidad Guanacasteca es en este momento, uno de los vértices del triángulo que, con el nombre de Alianza Democrática Nacional, ataja a manera de dique las tendencias totalitarias, que amenazan cegar y destruir las instituciones de verdadera democracia que han regido a nuestra patria." *El Guanacaste*, December 18, 1939, 1 y 3.

communism.[152] The Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca then went beyond its earlier territorial limits, fielding candidates for Congress in several provinces. As a consequence, the regionalist discourse became less prominent within the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca. *El Guanacaste* denounced social problems in the country as a whole, setting aside for the moment more specifically regionalist claims and demands.[153]

After the 1940 elections, the new administration began to enact reformist policies and socially progressive legislation, eventually allying with both the Catholic Church and the Communist Party (especially in 1942-1943). This unusual alliance ushered in a special period in Costa Rica, laying the base for the path to the future welfare state and negatively affecting the possibilities of the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca to gain support as defender of social justice and regional development. In the late 1930s Vargas and Confraternidad offered Guanacastecans a messianic populism that fired the imaginations and raised the expectations of striving middle sectors, marginal elites, and impoverished rural workers alike. Had the party ever reached a position of power, they would have faced real dilemmas of execution: the conciliatory rhetoric of regional "fraternity" would have been hard pressed to paper over the realities of conflicting interests within the coalition, to say nothing of the assaults from threatened privilege outside it. But while Dr. Vargas ailed, the other messianic Costa Rican doctor-politician, Dr. Calderón, managed the strategic manoeuvres necessary to pull off this same populist

[152] "…cumplimos con nuestro deber ciudadano, además de que así damos, a esos miles de costarricenses inconformes, la oportunidad de no volar sus votos o quedarse si votar." Rafael Armando Rodríguez, "En nuestras filas no hay calderonismo disimulado… Mal pueden los comunistas llamarnos tureca de ese partido." *El Guanacaste*, January 21, 1940, 1.

[153] The politically weakened regionalist movement would rise again after 1950, but in a form more culturalist than political.

realignment on a national stage, stealing the *Confraternos*' rhetorical thunder as he did so. It is worth noting that for all Calderón's charisma, he and his allies could only maintain the window of opportunity for his populist coalition for eight years, after which a civil war pushed them from power and yet a third middle-sector-led reformist movement took their place. In their foray electoral populism in the late 1930s, then, *El Guanacaste*'s middle-class activists and intellectuals turn out to have been entirely typical of their class and cohort across the nation—quite contrary to their rhetoric of Guanacastecan exceptionalism. Seen from this optic, once again the political imagination of region and nation seems mutually reinforcing, rather than inherently opposed.

Conclusion

This dissertation has shown how a regionalist discourse and movement, focused on isolation and the lack of public investment, emerged in a peripheral frontier province within a national state. Guanacaste was actually not the only peripheral region suffering from deficient progress of communications and infrastructure in Costa Rica; it was, however, the only one to produce a regionalist identity and political movement. To explain this particularity several factors have to be taken into account. The fact that Guanacaste—or the Partido de Nicoya—was incorporated into Costa Rica after independence generated a particular relationship with the Costa Rican state in formation, a relationship in which Guanacastecan elites sought to prove their loyalty the state by participating in a particular way in the postcolonial power struggles staged at the country's center. The idea that Costa Rican state was formed in the Central Valley without the participation of peripheral regions has been broadly accepted by scholars. However, **Chapter 1** of this dissertation shows that Guanacastecans were well aware of what was happening in the administrative center of the country and were eager to participate in the central state power structures after defining their preference to belong to Costa Rica. The complexity of the process of annexation also generated contradictory accounts on it. Guanacastecan leaders and local intellectuals made the "voluntary annexation" a means of vindicating their claim to rights within the national state. Throughout the period studied in this dissertation, local intellectuals used the "voluntary annexation" as justification for their demands before the central government. According to them, the voluntary character of the annexation decision automatically gave Guanacastecans special rights. On the other side of the national border, Nicaraguans

elaborated a national discourse bemoaning the loss of Guanacaste and Nicoya as due to the rapacity of Costa Ricans or to the mishandling of early republican internal politics by Nicaraguan leaders.

Another aspect that has given Guanacaste a unique position within Costa Rican state has been the ethnic composition of the Guanacastecan population. The first chapter of this dissertation shows how at the end of the colonial period, in the early nineteenth century, 85% of the population of Partido de Nicoya, Bagaces and Cañas was of recognized African ancestry. This ethnic reality made it difficult for Guanacastecans to be easily included in a nation that had created a self-image as white and racially homogeneous community. Popular common sense about race and origin in Costa Rica addressed this issue by retroactively erasing the African ancestry and heralding only the indigenous and the Spanish. Thus, by the time of the 1927 census, the government could define Guanacaste as *the* mestizo region of the Costa Rican nation, and encounter no skepticism from either "above" or "below." However, the promoters of regionalism did not discuss ethnicity or ancestry directly in their promotion of regional identity (the colonial genealogy was perhaps too unequivocal for comfort?). Instead, as is discussed below, regionalists carefully lauded those cultural elements selected as emblematic of Guanacastecan regional spirit in terms that placed Iberian and indigenous heritage front and center.

Chapter 2 argued that Guanacaste was left out of the "wagon of progress" that passed through the central region of the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was agro-export development and associated infrastructural modernization that made Guanacaste an isolated periphery in the context of the Costa Rican state.

Contemporary with the modernization of those areas of the country that were key to the agro-export economy—the Central Highlands and the axis between the Pacific and Atlantic ports—through liberal government investment, liberal-minded politicians and intellectuals *of the center and periphery alike* ended up internalizing the language of progress, which soon permeated practically all political discourses and intellectual production in Guanacaste as in the Central Highlands. In its chapter on Guanacaste, the *Libro Azúl 1916* provided an image of a modern province and urban life in Liberia, while the album of presidential visit in the same year offered a contrasting image of Guanacaste as a primitive environment, where the brave President on horseback forded rivers and traversed cattle fields in an endless *pampa* without roads or bridges. The contradictory sets of images each responded to political needs of their protagonists within a discursive context so fundamentally determined by the rhetoric of modernity and progress.

At the start of the twentieth century, Central Highland intellectuals began to portrait Guanacaste as a remote and unknown land inhabited by people with strange language and habits, essentially different from the rest of the country. Promoters of the emerging regionalism reproduced this image of Guanacaste as fundamentally different from the rest of the country, even as they also used the older rhetorics of provincial entitlement and Liberal modernity to denounce the lack of material progress in the province. The denunciations of abandonment and constructions of difference of Guanacaste that took shape in the early twentieth century formed the subject of **Chapter 3**. The development of printing technologies made possible a regular printed press, which became the primary vehicle of regionalist ideas and demands.[1]

The role of the urbanized middle sectors—professionals, intellectuals (mainly school teachers), lawyers, entrepreneurs, doctors, artists, and merchants—was crucial in the development of regional identity and a subsequent political movement. Traditionally Guanacastecan elite families had sent their sons to study abroad,[2] but in the late nineteenth century, the central state began to make funding available for Guanacastecan students in secondary schools, making it possible for them to spend several years studying in the capital city, Heredia, or Alajuela. Their schooling trained them to foster the ideology of Liberal nationalism and patriotism, and they applied their formation to produce a regionalist project as a part of the national one. At school, they learned the success story of the Costa Rican nation and civilization; wanting to be included in that success story, they subordinated regionalism to nationalism. They were Costa Ricans first, and only after that, Guanacastecans. The centenary of annexation was conceived as a great opportunity for Guanacaste to become full member of the nation, but that yearning was frustrated by the behavior of the government, causing bitterness among Guanacastecan intellectuals.

The development of Guanacastecan regionalism coincided with the evolution of social movements and conflicts within the ranching province. At the same time, the regionalist movement was deeply marked by the urban culture and intellectual circles of San José—an implicit counterpoint that generated multiple contradictions within the

[1] The role of printed press in the evolution of Guanacastecan regionalism was crucial, and it is not difficult to imagine *El Guanacaste* as the "one-day best-seller" (or, one-week best-seller, in those times when it was a weekly paper) for Guanacastecan followers of the movement. Cf. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections of the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised and reprinted edition (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 35.

[2] As in the case of Oldemar Soto Field, son of Maximiliano Soto, greeted by *El Guanacaste* when returning after his graduation from a U.S. college. "Atento saludo de bienevenida al joven estudiante," *El Guanacaste*, July 10, 1935, 3.

movement. In the 1930s, as a result of the effects of the world crisis and the exhaustion of the liberal state model, social conflicts and mobilization increased in both urban and rural areas in Costa Rica. In Guanacaste, the crisis led to growing conflict over land and to workplace tensions over worsening labor conditions, as explained in **Chapter 4**. In the mid-1930s, an intense regionalist organization (including the La Casa de Guanacaste society and the *El Guanacaste* newspaper) emerged among Guanacastecan intellectuals. Most of the activists lived in the capital city, but the content of regionalist discussions pointed spectators' and readers' gaze to the rural setting, precisely where social tension was causing increasing unrest. However, the great majority of regionalist writing used images drawn from the Guanacastecan reality to idealize rural life, rather than critique its bases. Facing conditions of social exclusion, the Guanacastecan lower classes found themselves symbolically included in regional identity, as the lower classes—especially dark-skinned cowboys, with the revitalization of the *sabanero* cult—became symbols of the province. Here, the question of race became unavoidable. The urgent attempts to associate Guanacaste and Guanacastecans with Andalusia and Andalusians suggest preoccupation over their possible identification with colonial African slaves instead. Hence regional publicists' rush to explain the racial composition of Guanacastecans as originated in the *Saracen Kings.*

The leading members of this movement were educators, primary school teachers, and other middle sectors. But some *hacendado* elites also tried reap its benefits: these elites emphasized the lack of communications and infrastructure in the province, and used the regionalist discourse to further their economic interests, trying to make their sectorial (class) interests the problem of the entire province. For these elites, the victim

of abandonment *was* the province. They did not mention the victims of social abandonment and exclusion *within* the province. To the contrary, the principal problem of the province was the lack of railroads, and the solution was to make the subalterns behave themselves, along lines carefully catechized in "Letanías": support and trust their patrons, who were sacrificing themselves for the good of all Guanacastecans. The regionalist discourse of the 1930s was not homogeneous, but the legacy of the regional identity built in this period strongly favored class conciliation and the obliteration of social differences within the province. The ideological ambiguity of the regionalist movement also affected the Partido Confraternidad Guanacasteca, founded in 1937, whose *caudillo* leader claimed to offer redemption to both laborers and bosses in the province. The party succeeded in its first electoral outing but failed decisively in subsequent years, as the national context came to be defined by the populist coalition of social Christians and communists.

Paraphrasing John Breuilly's assertion on nationalism, it can be stated that just as the creation of an imagined region and a regionalist movement cannot be explained by class interests alone, it cannot be understood without taking class interests into account.[3] The Guanacastecan regionalist movement of the 1930s was ideologically ambiguous and internally contradictory, as multiple class interests found in the regionalist newspaper and the party an important space of expression. Pretending to represent "all" Guanacastecans, elite and subaltern, the political movement met its end when Costa Rica's subaltern masses (including a resounding majority of poor Guanacastecans) preferred to identify themselves with the political alliance of social Christians and communists.

[3] John Breuilly, *Nacionalismo y Estado* (Barcelona: Ediciones Pomares – Corredor S.A., 1990), 317.

Guanacastecan regionalism was not an artificially invented discourse, but neither was it merely a natural expression of a preexisting reality.[4] Regionalism in Guanacaste emerged as certain articulate up-and-comers felt the need to make sense of provincial circumstances born of the province's historical relationship with the central state and come to terms with the social relations produced by a three-centuries-long process of colonization, forced migration, land appropriation, and market insertion. The promoters of Guanacaste regionalism, speaking in the name of the whole province, unwittingly revealed a great deal about themselves. In order to survive, the Guanacastecan regionalist movement would have had to transform itself into a mass movement—a task that seems to have eluded its leaders' imaginative reach as much as their organizational grasp.

[4] Ibid., 361.

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Researcher, Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de América Central (CIHAC), Universidad de Costa Rica, 2000, 2003 – 2004.

Interim Instructor, Escuela de Historia, Universidad de Costa Rica, 2001 – 2004. Courses: *Introducción a la Historia y técnicas de su estudio I*; *Historia Contemporánea de Centroamérica y el Caribe*; *Historia General de Centroamérica con énfasis en Costa Rica*; *Historia Contemporánea de América Latina*.

Instructor, Associated Colleges of the Midwest, Field Program in Costa Rica, Fall Semester 2003. Course taught: *Contemporary History of Central America*.

Instructor, Programa de intercambio Pennsylvania State University – Universidad de Costa Rica, Spring 2003. Universidad de Costa Rica. Course taught: *Latin American Culture and Civilization*.

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Academic Assistant to the Dean of the Graduate School, Universidad de Costa Rica, September – December 1999.

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Instructor, *Contemporary Problems in Latin America*, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, Second Summer Session 1999.

Course Assistant, *Colonial Latin America*, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, First Summer Session 1999.

Associate Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, 1998-1999. Courses: *History of Today's Crises: the Past and Present*, and *Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Latin America*.

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Organizer of the Seminary on Oral History: Historia oral en Costa Rica: balance y perspectives, Centro de Investigaciones Históricas de América Central – Archivo Nacional, September 1995. (65 participants)

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PUBLICATIONS

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